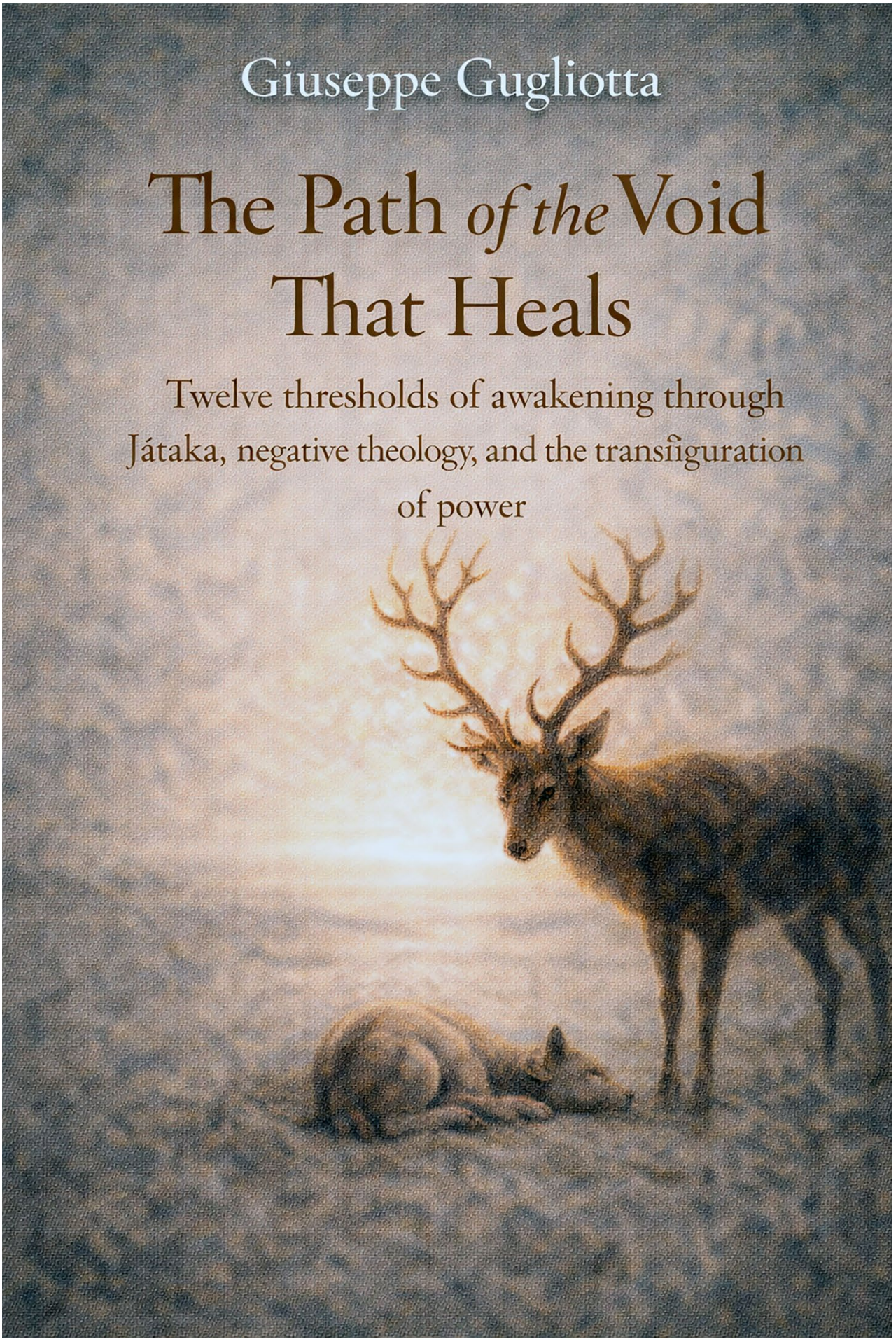
Giuseppe Gugliotta

The Path *of the* Void That Heals

Twelve thresholds of awakening through Jātaka, negative theology, and the transfiguration of power



The Way of the Healing Void

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Introduction

This project does not propose a path of spiritual elevation, nor a pedagogy of the "best self".

The Way of the Healing Void does not lead to a new identity, but to the progressive dissolution of what we call subject, power, merit, salvation.

Through twelve Jātakas reinterpreted as stations of an initiatory journey, the work follows a radical trajectory: from non-illusion to responsibility, from care stripped of calculation to intercession, up to the ontological compassion of the Banyan Deer (Nigrodhamiga). But what is called "compassion" here is not sentiment, nor moral virtue: it is a mutation of the structure of being, a silent subversion of the order based on sacrifice.

Each table is a threshold. Each threshold is a subtraction.

Truths do not accumulate: footholds are lost.

A higher form is not conquered: the claim to be a center is dropped.

In the heart of the Way, the Banyan Deer does not save: it becomes. He does not intercede as a benevolent power, but transforms power itself by making it superfluous. And beyond this point, in the apophatic Epilogue, the figure also withdraws: only a light without a source remains, a horizon without objects, the emptiness that heals because it belongs to no one.

This is not an edifying narrative.

It is an exercise in spoliation.

An iconography of non-appropriation.

An invitation to let the Way be fulfilled not as a possession, but as the cessation of separation.

Nigrodhamiga Jātaka: Il Cervo del Banyan

Long ago, when the world was younger and the forest still spoke the language of light, there lived a deer with a body shining like burnished gold. His eyes were clear as gems, his horns shone like silver, and his hooves seemed to be dipped in lacquer. Wherever he moved, the forest seemed to become silent, as if listening.

The animals called him the Banyan Deer, their king.

Five hundred deer followed him, trusting not only in his strength, but above all in his meekness. Not far away lived another golden deer with his herd, known as the Branch Deer: splendid in appearance, but hard of heart.

In those days, the king of Benares loved hunting above all else. Every day he summoned the people, taking them away from work, and together they crossed the forests with bows, spears and shouts. The deer fled in terror, were shot several times and often died in agony before they were even taken away.

Eventually, tired of abandoning their lives for the sovereign's amusement, the inhabitants devised a plan. They sowed grass and dug ponds in the royal park, then pushed large herds of deer into it and closed the gates. "Now," said they to the king, "your hunt is here. Leave the forests and allow us to get back to our work."

The king agreed. When he entered the park, his eyes immediately fell on two shining deer: the Banyan Deer and the Branch Deer. Struck by their beauty, he granted them both immunity: they would never be killed.

But their followers were not spared.

Every day the king or his cook came to the park. At the sight of the arch, the deer dispersed in panic. Many were injured before one was finally shot down. The park resounded with fear.

When the suffering reached his ears, the Banyan Stag called to the Branch Stag and said, "Friend, death cannot be avoided, but cruelty can. Let's take shifts. One day a deer from my herd will offer itself. The following day, one of yours. The chosen one will go calmly and place his neck on the stump, so that no one will be chased or injured."

The Branch Deer agreed.

From that day, the park became silent. Every morning, a deer advanced and offered its life without terror.

Then, one day, the lot fell on a doe in the Branch Deer herd—a doe carrying a baby in her womb.

She went to her king and bowed. "My lord," said she, "I am pregnant. Let this shift be spared me. When my baby is born, there will be two of us to take our share."

The Branch Deer turned. "I cannot change what fate has chosen. Go."

Trembling, the doe then went to the Banyan Stag and told him her story. He listened in silence, then said softly, "Go back to the forest. Your life will be spared."

That evening, as the sun reddened the sky, the Banyan Deer walked alone to the place of sacrifice. He knelt down and placed his shining neck on the stump.

When the cook saw it, he cried out in horror, "It is the golden stag—the one that the king himself spared!" He ran to the palace.

The king rushed to the park and stopped in front of the noble animal. "My friend," he said in shock, "didn't I give you life? Why are you here?"

The Banyan Deer looked up. "Great king, a pregnant doe begged me for mercy. I could not transfer his death to another creature. So I took his place. There is no other reason: only compassion."

The king's heart broke and opened. "Never, not even among men," said he, "have I seen so much charity, so much love, so much pity."

He raised his hand. "Get up. I'll spare your life—and his."

"Only two?" asked the Banyan Deer gently. "And the others?"

"I'll save everyone."

"And those beyond this park? The deer of every forest?"

"Their lives will also be spared."

"And the four-legged animals—oxen, goats, all that walk the earth?"

"They won't be killed."

"And the birds of the air? The fish of the waters?"

"Everyone will be spared."

Then the Banyan Deer stood up, radiant in the light of the sunset, and spoke not as a beast, but as a master:

"Walk in righteousness, O king. He governs with justice towards parents and children, towards citizens and peasants. Thus, when this body dissolves, you will enter a dwelling of peace."

For a few days the golden deer remained in the park, instructing the king in the law of compassion. Then he returned with his pack to the forest.

In time, the spared doe gave birth to a fawn as delicate as a lotus bud. The little boy loved to play with the herd of the Branch Deer, but his mother gently admonished him:

"Don't walk with them, my son. He walks alone with the Banyan Deer."

And he spoke this truth:

Better is death in the company of the righteous,

than a long life among those who have no heart.

From that moment, the deer, knowing that they were safe, began to enter the men's fields. The peasants did not dare to drive them away. When they complained to the king, he said, "I would give up my kingdom before I broke my promise."

But when the news reached the Banyan Deer, he summoned his herd. "From this day forward," he said, "you will not eat what others have sown."

He sent a message to the people: "Mark your fields only with leaves tied to the edges." And it is said that never again did a deer cross such a marked border.

Such lived the Banyan Deer—teaching without strength, ruling without fear, saving without asking for reward. And when his long life came to an end, he passed on according to his works, as did the king who had learned compassion from him.

And the Master revealed:

The Banyan Deer was the Buddha himself in a previous life.

The Branch Deer was Devadatta.

The pregnant doe was the future nun.

His fawn was Prince Kassapa.

And the king was Ānanda.

Thus it was taught:

that compassion is older than kings,

that sacrifice is stronger than the law,

and that true refuge is not found in power, but in mercy.

Reading the image

Three levels: descriptive, symbolic-narrative (Jātaka) and contemplative (doctrine of awakening), as if it were a small meditative icon.

Image description

The scene is set in a forest clearing, bright but collected, almost a natural temple.

In the center, on a sort of altar-stone, lies the Banyan Deer, gilded, with its body bent in an attitude of offering. The light horns, the luminous mantle, the calm posture communicate royalty and abandonment at the same time.

In front of him stands the king of Benares, in rich but sober clothes, with his hand raised in a gesture that is both command and blessing: it is the exact moment of the suspension of violence.

Around:

– soldiers and hunters who assist, witnesses of human power;

– animals of many species (deer, birds, rabbits, monkeys), gathered in an unnatural stillness, as if the whole world were holding its breath.

In the background, between the clouds and the light, the figure of the Buddha appears, seated, radiating, not as a historical protagonist but as a principle of consciousness that dominates and permeates the scene.

The distant palace and the forest frame two worlds: civilization and nature, power and life.

Reading according to the Jātaka

In the story, this is the karmic turning point:

the Bodhisatta, in the form of the Banyan Deer, offers himself in place of the pregnant deer.

a) The Deer as Bodhisatta

The posture of the deer – not fleeing, not defending, but self-surrendering – visualizes the central act of the Jātaka:

not an aggressive heroism, but a radical compassion that accepts to take upon itself the destiny of the other.

Its golden coat distinguishes it from other animals: not for superiority of power, but for ethical quality. He is "king" not because he dominates, but because he serves.

b) The King as a consciousness in transformation

The gesture of the king, with his hand raised, marks the instant when power ceases to be blind.

He is not yet an enlightened man: he is a man who stops before innocent sacrifice.

In the Jātaka, this arrest becomes expansive:

First save the deer, then all the deer, then all the animals, then all the beings.

The image captures him at a time when power is still ambiguous, but open to conversion.

c) The Buddha's presence in heaven

Narratively, the Buddha was not "there" as a visible figure in the story: the Deer is the Buddha in a previous life.

The image, however, introduces the Buddha as the transcendent horizon of the scene: what happens below is already enveloped by a vaster consciousness.

This creates a double register:

below: the ethical drama over time,

above: the timeless awareness that crosses it.

Reading According to the Doctrine of Revival

Here the image becomes a true contemplative mandala.

a) Sacrifice as disidentification

On the path of awakening, it is not a question of morally "saving", but of dissolving the illusion of the separate self.

The Banyan Deer does not act as a heroic subject who "chooses to be good", but as a conscience that no longer radically distinguishes between self and other.

Taking the place of the doe is not altruism in the ordinary sense: it is non-duality incarnate.

In terms of the doctrine of revival:

There is no "me" that saves a "you": there is emptiness that becomes form to prevent suffering.

b) The king as an ego that stops

The king represents the principle of ego-power, of the will to control the world.

The gesture of the raised hand is symbolically very powerful: it is the moment in which the doing is interrupted, in which the action is suspended by presence.

In the language of awakening:

hunting = compulsive movement of the ego,

Suspension = first glimmer of awareness.

The king does not light up; stops. And that's enough for the world to change direction.

c) Animals: the reconciled cosmos

The circle of animals around the scene is not naturalism: it is symbolic cosmology.

They represent:

the multiplicity of beings,

the different realms of existence,

the shared vulnerability.

In awakening, salvation is not individual: it is ontological.

When ignorance dissolves in one place, the whole field of being is touched.

That is why, in the Jātaka, the Buddha asks not only for the salvation of one, but of all beings.

d) The Buddha in the sky: consciousness without center

The luminous figure of the Buddha does not dominate the scene: he does not intervene, he does not order, he does not correct.

It is pure presence, as if it were saying:

What you see is not a moral event, but a revelation of the nature of reality.

In apophatic language:

the Buddha is not a character,

it is the space of awareness in which the sacrifice takes place.

Concluding Comment

This image does not simply tell a story of goodness, but visualizes a structure of awakening:

Suffering is universal (animals, hunting).

The answer is not domination, but the substitution of oneself for the other (the Deer on the stump).

Power is transformed when it stops (the hand of the king).

Compassion does not save anyone: it transfigures the field of being (all animals, the universal vow).

Behind the action, there is the luminous void of awareness (the Buddha in the sky).

In summary:

The image shows that awakening is not an escape from the world, but an interruption of the cycle of violence through non-separation.

He doesn't say, "Be good."

He says, "Wake up, and you will find that there is no one to sacrifice, for there is no separate to save."

Jātaka 12 (Nigrodhamiga)

It is not an isolated episode: in the canon of the first Jātaka forms a real threshold in the "path of awakening". The first eleven stories build the ground; the twelfth introduces a qualitative leap: from personal ethical perfection to non-dual compassion.

The movement has three levels: thematic progression, turning of Jātaka 12, and reading into the doctrine of awakening.

Thematic progression

1) The first 11 Jātakas: training of consciousness

The early Jatakas present the Bodhisatta primarily as a moral subject: someone who learns not to act on impulse, fear, or personal advantage.

Although there are differences between the stories, three major axes emerge:

a) Discernment and karmic intelligence

Many of the early Jatakas show the Bodhisatta as:

prudent,

far-sighted,

able to see the consequences of actions.

Way of awakening: the mind is educated to see instead of reacting.

b) Self-discipline and non-egoism

The Bodhisatta often renounces:

immediate benefits,

pleasures,

affirmations of the ego.

Path of awakening: identification with desire and appropriation is weakened.

c) Ethics as purification

In the early Jātaka virtue is still personal:

"I do not do evil",

"I choose the good",

"I avoid guilt".

It is a necessary phase: the ego is refined, not yet overcome.

The Jātaka 12: The Threshold

With the Nigrodhamiga Jātaka something radically different happens.

Here the Bodhisatta does not limit himself to:

to be just,

avoid evil,

choose the asset.

He takes upon himself the destiny of the other.

It doesn't say:

"I'll protect you."

He says:

"I become what you are about to undergo."

This marks the passage:

From → Ethics to the Ontology of Compassion

a) From virtue to self-substitution

In the previous Jātaka:

the Bodhisatta acts as a moral subject.

In Jātaka 12:

the Bodhisatta allows himself to be erased as a separate subject.

He does not "save" the doe:

takes his place.

This is the first clearly non-dual act: the suffering of the other is no longer "his".

b) From individual salvation to the liberation of the field

The gesture of the deer does not only produce:

the salvation of the doe,

their own survival.

It produces:

the release of all the deer,

then of all the animals,

then, symbolically, of all beings.

Compassion is no longer a local act: it becomes a transformation of the field of being.

In the early Jatakas the Bodhisatta improves the world indirectly.

Here he transfigures him structurally.

Reading in the Doctrine of Revival

From the point of view of the path of awakening, intertwined with negative theology and non-duality, the first 11 Jātakas prepare the ground, but the 12th introduces a new level of consciousness.

Stage 1: Purification of the Ego (Jātaka 1–11)

The ego is educated.

Passions are disciplined.

Action becomes right.

But there is still one structure:

"I who do good"

Stage 2: Disidentification (Jātaka 12)

In the Nigrodhamiga:

the ego no longer seeks to be good,

he does not even seek to be saved,

he allows himself to be emptied for the other.

It is the first gesture in which it clearly appears:

"There is no self separate from that which suffers."

This is the heart of the doctrine of revival:

Compassion does not arise from morality, but from non-separation.

4) The Meaning of the Pair: Banyan Deer / Branch Deer

A decisive element of Jātaka 12 is the contrast:

Banyan Deer (Bodhisatta): Compassion that empties.

Branch Deer (Devadatta): Karmic justice, impersonal law, "let each bear his own destiny".

The first 11 Jātakas are even closer to the logic of the Branch Deer:

merit,

individual responsibility,

justice of actions.

The 12 shows the overcoming:

You don't deny karma, but you absorb it into a larger consciousness.

5) Synthesis: The Role of Jātaka 12 in the Way

We could express it like this:

Jātaka 1–11:

How to become a righteous being.

Jātaka 12:

How to cease to be a "separate being".

On the way to awakening:

1. first you learn not to do evil,

2. then you learn to no longer be the one who "does".

The Nigrodhamiga Jātaka is the first epiphany of non-dual compassion:

not a higher ethics, but a deeper ontology.

6) In an apophatic final formula

If the first Jātakas say:

"Purify action."

The twelfth says:

"Drop the one who does."

And it is from this fall of the ego that the true liberation of all beings can arise.

Stations of an initiatory journey

Register: initiatory, apophatic, critical of power, without reducing the Jātaka to simple moralism, a map in 12 stations, where the first stories constitute a *purification of the ego*, and the Nigrodhamiga Jātaka (12) marks the passage from morality to the metaphysics of awakening, a point linked to negative theology, Cioran and criticism of power.

I. The 12 Jātakas as the Initiatory Way of Awakening

Not as "edifying stories", but as a process of dismantling identity.

1–3. Awakening of karmic consciousness

Theme: seeing the consequences.

The Bodhisatta learns:

that every action generates world,

that the blind impulse is imprisonment,

that life is not neutral.

Initiatory function: Birth of responsibility. The ego begins to *see*.

But it is still an "I": observant, prudent, calculating.

4–6. Desire discipline

Theme: not appropriating.

Here is the Bodhisatta:

waiver of the benefit,

he refuses unjust gain,

he does not allow himself to be governed by pleasure or fear.

Function: Disempowerment of the economic and drive ego.

The ego is no longer predatory, but remains the center of virtuous action.

7–9. Relational ethics

Theme: justice, loyalty, protection of others.

The Bodhisatta:

protects the weak,

acts for the common good,

embodies a moral order.

Function: Birth of the ethical self.

But be careful: it is still a fair subjectivity, not yet dissolved. It is a "good me", but always a me.

10–11. Stripping of prestige

Theme: loss of status, renunciation of recognition.

Here is the hero:

agrees not to appear as a winner,

he loses role, security, honor,

He goes through humiliation.

Function: The ego begins to give way in form, but remains in substance.

We are at the threshold: a righteous subject, bare, but still a subject.

II. Jātaka 12 (Nigrodhamiga): la Soglia Ontologica

Here the street changes its nature.

It is no longer a question of:

to do good,

to be just,

choose correctly.

But of:

to cease to be a "separate self".

The Bodhisatta does not help the doe. It becomes his destiny.

This is the point where the route:

is no longer ethical,

is no longer psychological,

but ontological and apophatic.

There is no "I" that performs a good act: there is non-separation from the suffering of the other.

III. Connection with Negative Theology

In apophatic theology:

God is not this, he is not that,

every attribute falls,

the super-essential void remains.

In the Nigrodhamiga, the same happens with the subject:

not: "I am good"

not: "I am compassionate"

not: "I save"

but:

I am not separated from what suffers.

The Bodhisatta does not *do* compassion: it is the emptying in which the other is himself.

As in Dionysius the Areopagite:

God is not a being among beings,

Thus the awakened person is not a subject among subjects.

Compassion here is apophatic: not based on identity, will, or merit, but on de-subjectivation.

IV. Connection with Cioran

Cioran unmasks every salvific construction based on the ego:

progress is illusion,

heroism is narcissism,

Morality is often a form of power.

In the Nigrodhamiga:

the Branch Deer (Devadatta) embodies the logic of karma as an impersonal law: "let each bear his own destiny".

the Banyan Deer breaks this law not to reform it, but to cross it.

Cioran would have recognized here:

not an optimistic redemption,

but a tragic, anti-systemic, anti-teleological gesture.

The Bodhisatta does not build a better world. It suspends the world as it is.

It is a "Cioranian" act in the deepest sense:

does not redeem history,

interrupts the mechanism.

It does not promise meaning: it absorbs pain without justifying it.

V. Connection with the Critique of Power

The king represents:

sovereignty,

right of life and death,

management of lives as a resource.

The deer does not rebel, it does not conquer, it does not replace the king. He does something more radical: it empties power of its foundation.

Because power lives on separation:

who commands / who suffers,

who is worth / who is expendable.

The Bodhisatta is on the side of the expendable. It does not ask for rights: it assumes the victim.

Here the critique of power is not political but ontological:

power exists as long as there is "other" to use,

when there is no longer "anything else", power remains without an object.

This is very close to reading:

power as a metaphysical structure of separation, not only as an institution.

VI. The Way in Initiatory Synthesis

Station	Movement	Level
1–3	See the consequences	Cognitive
4–6	Giving up desire	Ascetic
7–9	Acting for others	Ethical
10–11	Losing Role and Honor	Kenotic
12	Becoming the Other	Ontological / Non-dual

Jātaka 12 is not "better" than the others: it is beyond goodness as a category.

VII. Final Apophatic Formula

If the first Jātaka say:

"It becomes right."

Il Nigrodhamiga dice:

"He who wants to be righteous falls."

And in the void that remains:

there is no merit,

there is no power,

there is no subject,

but only compassion as the structure of being.

Not an ethics of good. An ontology of non-separation.

Way of Awakening in 12 thresholds

A visual-poetic journey inspired by the early Jātaka and culminating in the Nigrodhamiga. Not a moral, but an initiatory map of disidentification.

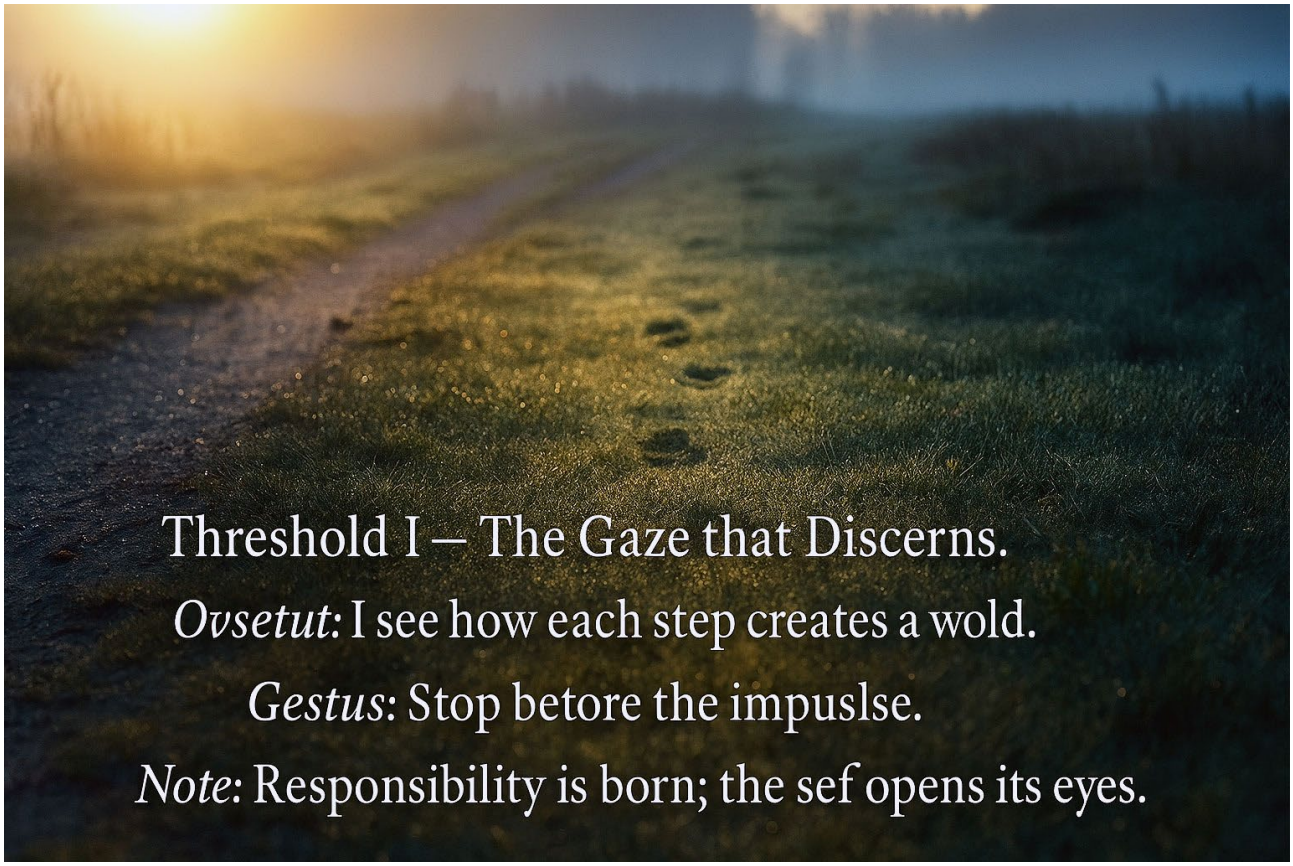
Threshold I — The Noticing Gaze

Image: A road in the morning, footprints appearing in the dew.

Verse: I see that every step creates the world.

Gestus: stopping before the impulse.

Note: Responsibility arises; the ego opens the eyes.



The image generated for Threshold I — The Noticing Gaze visually translates a profound philosophical concept: the exact moment when consciousness awakens and recognizes its impact on reality.

1. Visual Description and Atmosphere

The image captures a moment of extreme stillness. The composition is dominated by a natural path that gets lost in a morning fog, a symbol of the uncertainty of the future or the indistinctness from which we emerge.

The Light: The "grazing light" of dawn hits the grass from the side, turning every drop of dew into a small point of light. This creates a sharp contrast between the shadowed areas (cool, bluish tones) and the golden reflections (waking up).

The Footprints: The footprints are not dug into the mud, but imprinted in the dew and trampled grass. They are ephemeral and delicate, yet clearly visible. They represent the passage of someone who is no longer physically in the frame, emphasizing the absence of the required human figure.

2. Symbolic Analysis: "I see that every step creates the world"

The heart of Threshold I is the discovery of consequentiality.

Poetic Minimalism: The choice not to show the individual shifts the focus from the "I" as a body to the "I" as an action. The footprint is tangible proof that our passage modifies the surrounding environment.

Dew as a Mirror: Dew represents the purity and fragility of virgin reality. Trampling on it is not a destructive act, but it is the necessary act of existence. "To notice" means to notice that mark left on the "intact world".

3. The Gestus Commentary: "Stop Before the Impulse"

The image evokes this *Gestus* through the shallow depth of field. The fire is sharp on the nearby footprints, while the rest of the path fades into vague.

The visual invitation is to look where the feet rest *now*, in this instant.

The static nature of the photo suggests a contemplative pause: the wayfarer has stopped, turned around (ideally) or is looking down, realizing the extent of his movement before taking the next step.

4. The Birth of Responsibility

The note reads: "responsibility arises; the "I" opens the eyes".

The combination of cold colors (sleep, the unconscious, the receding night) and the golden accent (the spark of consciousness) visually tells this "opening of the eyes". Responsibility is not a burden here, but a luminosity: the awareness that the world is not just "outside", but is something that we help to form, step by step.

This image acts as a portal: it does not tell us where to go, but asks us to become aware of the fact that we are walking.

The mirage

No. 1 Apannaka-Jātaka: The Truth vs. the Mirage

This story was told by the Buddha while he was residing in the monastery of Jetavana, to admonish five hundred disciples who had abandoned the true doctrine to return to erroneous beliefs, seduced by fallacious arguments. The Buddha told them a story from the past to illustrate the danger of mistaking the false for the true.

A long time ago, in the city of Benares, there lived two merchants. One was the Bodhisatta (the Buddha in a previous life), a wise and prudent man. The other was a foolish and reckless young merchant. Both were preparing to cross a vast desert of sixty leagues with caravans of five hundred wagons each. Knowing that a thousand wagons together would run out of resources along the way, they decided to leave separately. The foolish merchant chose to leave first, convinced that he would find the best way and resources intact. The Bodhisatta, seeing the advantages of following a well-trodden track and finding wells already dug, agreed to start second.

The foolish merchant entered the "Waterless Desert," a place haunted by demons. In the middle of the journey, a powerful demon (goblin) decided to devour them. He created a magical illusion: he appeared on a magnificent cart pulled by white oxen, accompanied by an entourage. He and his attendants were adorned with garlands of fresh lotus, their clothes and hair were soaked with water, and the wheels of the wagon were splashed with mud. They chewed juicy lotus stems.

The demon stopped the foolish merchant and asked him where he was going. The merchant, amazed at their wet appearance, asked if it had rained. The demon lied shamelessly: "Don't you see that green strip of forest on the horizon? Beyond that point it is always raining, there are lotus lakes and plenty of water." Then, noticing the merchant's heavy wagons, he advised him: "Why are you carrying those heavy jars of water? Water is nearby. Break the jars, lighten the load and you will travel faster."

The foolish merchant, believing this pleasant lie without seeking proof, ordered his men to break all the jars and throw away the precious water. They went on, but found neither forest, nor rain, nor lakes. It was just a mirage created by the demon. Exhausted by thirst, they camped at sunset. That night, the demons attacked and devoured the entire caravan, leaving only bones and loaded wagons.

Six weeks later, the Bodhisatta entered the wilderness. He had warned his men not to waste a drop of water and not to trust anything unknown. The same demon appeared to him with its illusion of rain and freshness, advising him to throw the water.

But the Bodhisatta was wise. He carefully observed the "noble" stranger and noticed a crucial detail: despite the scorching sun, the demon and his retinue did not cast any shadow. In addition, his eyes were red and ruthless.

The Bodhisatta chased the demon away, saying, "We are prudent merchants; let's not throw away the water we have before we have seen where to find more."

When the demon had left, the Bodhisattva's men, tempted by the idea of water nearby, asked to be allowed to lighten the wagons. The Bodhisatta asked them, "Have any of you ever heard of a lake in this wilderness? Have you felt the rain wind? Have you seen a flash of lightning or heard thunder?" When they answered in the negative, he explained that they were deceptive demons.

Continuing with their water supply intact, they soon found the remains of the fool's caravan. The Bodhisatta had his men camp in a defensive formation, and the next day they exchanged their wagons and goods for the more valuable ones abandoned by the first caravan. They completed the journey safely and made great profits.

The Buddha concluded by explaining that clinging to the truth leads to salvation, while being deceived by illusions leads to ruin.

Image Description

The generated image is a vast cinematic photograph that captures the crucial moment of choice in the desert.

Close-up and Left (Reality): A long caravan of heavy wooden carts dominates the scene, pulled by sturdy oxen that cast sharp and dark shadows on the arid and cracked ground. The chariots are loaded with large sealed terracotta amphorae, clearly containing water. The men of the caravan appear dusty and tired. On the leading chariot sits the leader, an elderly man with a beard (the Bodhisatta), who shields his eyes with one hand, looking with an expression of calculated distrust at the scene unfolding to his right.

Center-Right (The Illusion): In stark contrast, a group appears on an ornate and gilded cart, pulled by white oxen. The figures on the chariot (one of which has blue skin, evoking a deity or supernatural being) are adorned with fresh garlands of flowers and seem to point persuasively towards the horizon.

Background and Atmosphere: The sky above the caravan is clear, relentless, and dusty. However, just behind the chariot of illusion, the horizon changes dramatically: dark storm clouds and streaks of rain fall on what looks like a verdant forest. The entire scene is bathed in intense, warm sunlight.

Image Analysis

The image is a powerful visual translation of the central conflict of the Jātaka: discernment versus deception.

The Revealing Detail (The Shadows): The most sophisticated element of the image is the management of shadows, faithful to the text of the Jātaka (where the Bodhisatta notes the absence of shadow of the

demon). While the royal caravan on the left casts heavy, earthly shadows that anchor it to the reality of the desert, the group on the golden chariot on the right looks strangely ethereal. The light around them is diffused, and they do not cast the same defined, dark shadows on the ground, suggesting their illusory nature.

The Climate Discrepancy: The image visualizes the demon's lie by creating an impossible climate "bubble." The rain and the green forest appear *only* as an immediate backdrop to the deceptive figures, while the rest of the vast landscape remains an arid desert. This emphasizes that the promised "salvation" is only a projection of their magic.

The Posture of the Sage: The Bodhisatta is not looking at the figures, but is looking *beyond* and *through* them, shielding his eyes not only from the sun, but metaphorically from the dazzle of illusion. His posture is that of empirical verification, as opposed to blind acceptance.

The Weight of Truth: The large, heavy terracotta amphorae on the Bodhisatta's chariots are visually bulky. They represent the difficult truth and the burden of necessary preparation, which the fool is tempted to abandon for the promise of non-existent ease.

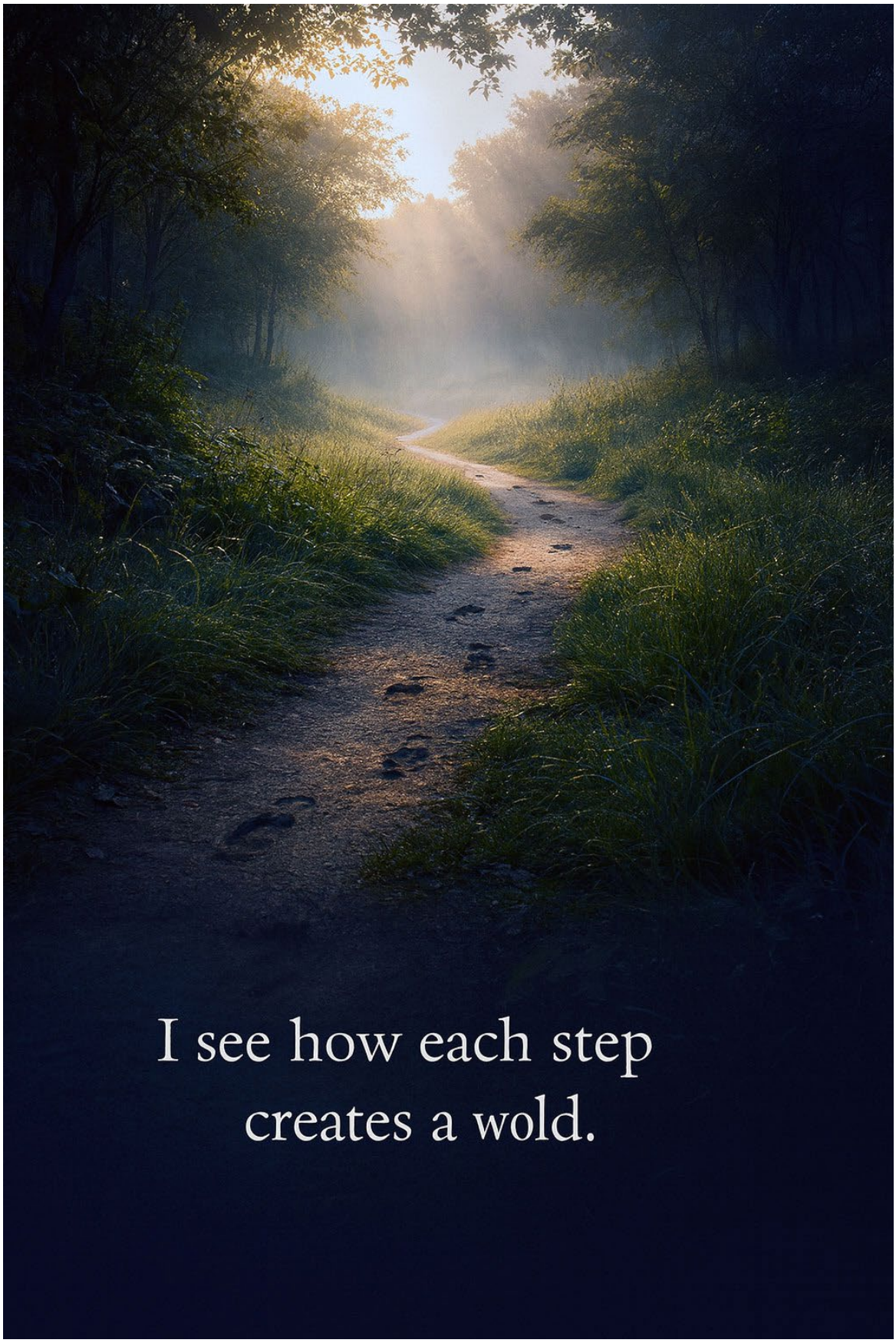
Comment

This image brilliantly manages to capture the narrative tension of the Apannaka Jātaka without using words. It transforms an abstract philosophical concept (truth versus falsehood) into a tangible visual drama.

The strength of the image lies in the way it forces the viewer to share the Bodhisatta's perspective. At first glance, the image of rain and the divine chariot is tempting and seems like salvation in the desert. Only through closer observation (noting the shadows and localized nature of the rain) can the observer, like the wise merchant, understand the deception.

The image serves as a perfect visual reminder of the moral of the story: in a world full of seductive mirages and promises of easy solutions, salvation lies in critical thinking, careful observation of reality (shadows) and not abandoning one's certain resources (water in the right ones) based on mere appearances.

No. 1 Apannaka-Jātaka: Don't be fooled by the mirage



The Gaze that Notices: On the steps of the golden morning. Awakening begins when action stops being blind.

I. STORY—Apannaka-Jātaka (The Path That Deceives Not)

At one time, when the world was still young in its sorrow and hope, the Bodhisatta was born as a wise merchant, endowed with a vision that went beyond the appearance of things.

In a large trading city, merchants were preparing for a long desert crossing: an expanse without water, without shade, without mercy. Two chiefs led two caravans. One was the Bodhisatta; the other, a charming, self-confident man, skilled in speaking.

The Bodhisatta said to his men:

"This desert does not forgive mistakes. Bring plenty of supplies with you. Don't trust what promises shortcuts."

But the other merchant stepped forward, with a light smile:

"Why load yourself with unnecessary burdens? I know a faster way. A hidden, shorter, more comfortable track. Those who follow me will arrive sooner, with less effort."

Many were seduced by those words. His caravan set off lightly, confidently, like those who believe that the world should be simple.

The Bodhisatta, on the other hand, advanced slowly. His caravans were heavy: skins full of water, provisions, tired but protected animals. Every step seemed excessive. Every choice appeared prudent to the point of boredom.

In the heart of the desert, the mirage made its appearance.

Palm trees, lakes, shade, coolness. The travelers of the "light" caravan ran towards that promise. But it was only appearance: sand disguised as salvation.

One by one, they fell. Without water, without strength, without return.

The Bodhisatta, who arrived later, saw what remained: bodies, abandoned wagons, silence. He made his people stop. He distributed the water, guided the survivors, continued without rejoicing.

And he taught:

"There are paths that seem easy and lead to dissolution.

And paths that weigh, but do not deceive.

The first step of awakening is not to choose what shines, but what is true."

Thus the Bodhisatta led his disciples to the end of the journey, showing that the safe way is not the short way, but the way that does not betray.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE IMAGE

The picture shows:

A path in the forest at dawn, bathed in golden light and light fog.

Footprints on the damp ground, signs of a passage that has just taken place.

The road that is lost in the depths, without a visible destination.

No human figure, only the path and the trace.

Below, the aphorism:

"I see that every step creates the world."

Visually it is a threshold: it does not tell an event, but a decision.

III. ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

1. Apannaka = "that which does not deviate"

In Pali, apannaka means:

Safe, infallible, non-deceptive.

The Jātaka does not oppose two "good vs bad" paths, but:

A seductive, fast, optimized way

A sober, heavy, apparently inefficient way

Here is born the critique of power:

power almost never imposes destruction by force;

it proposes it as a convenience, as an efficiency, as a shortcut.

The rival merchant is the archetypal figure of domination:

the one who promises less effort, more results,

but it erases the real conditions of existence.

2. The image as an initiatory threshold

The path in the picture is not spectacular. There is no triumph, no obvious threat. There is only walking.

Fingerprints are decisive:

We do not see who walks, but we see that someone has already chosen.

This corresponds perfectly to the first Jātaka:

It is not a story of mystical enlightenment.

It is a story of primordial discernment.

Before Compassion (Nigrodhamiga)

before the renunciation

Before anonymity

… there is the ability not to be seduced.

The image does not depict the desert, but the moment before the desert:

the silent choice to charge water instead of trusting the mirage.

3. Negative theology: the true as that which does not deceive

In an apophatic key:

The right path is not "bright", "triumphant", "guaranteed".

It is what does not promise, does not seduce, does not dazzle.

God, the Good, the Revival:

they do not show themselves as evidence, but as the absence of deception.

The Bodhisatta does not offer visions, but resistance to appearances.

The image, devoid of religious symbols, is profoundly apophatic:

He does not say "this is the truth", but suggests: there is no lie here.

4. Cioran and the disenchantment of the shortcut

Cioran would have recognized the heart of the Jātaka at once:

Any promise of quick salvation is a form of violence.

Apannaka is:

the renunciation of the consolatory illusion,

the acceptance that awakening is not spectacular,

the rejection of the "metaphysics of efficiency".

The path in the image is not heroic: it is tiring, humble, anonymous.

But precisely for this reason he does not lie.

5. Critique of power: against the systemic shortcut

In contemporary language:

The seductive merchant = ideology of progress at no cost.

The desert = material reality, ecological limit, human fragility.

Light caravans = systems that eliminate reserves, protections, breaks.

Death in the desert = collapse that comes when there is no more water.

Apannaka dice:

not everything that accelerates frees;

not everything that weighs oppresses.

The image does not show any cars, cities, or ruins:

but precisely for this reason it becomes a radical critique:

The human journey is not a production line.

6. The aphorism as an initiatory seal

"I see that every step creates the world."

Here is contained the whole Jātaka:

Every choice builds a reality.

Every shortcut creates a desert.

Every fidelity to reality, even tiring, generates the possibility of life.

In the 12 threshold path, Apannaka is:

The threshold of discernment.

Even before compassion: lucidity.

Before love: the truth that does not console.

Poetic synthesis

Apannaka does not teach us to be holy.

It teaches not to be deceived.

And the image says it without words:

a path that promises nothing, but which, step by step, does not betray reality.

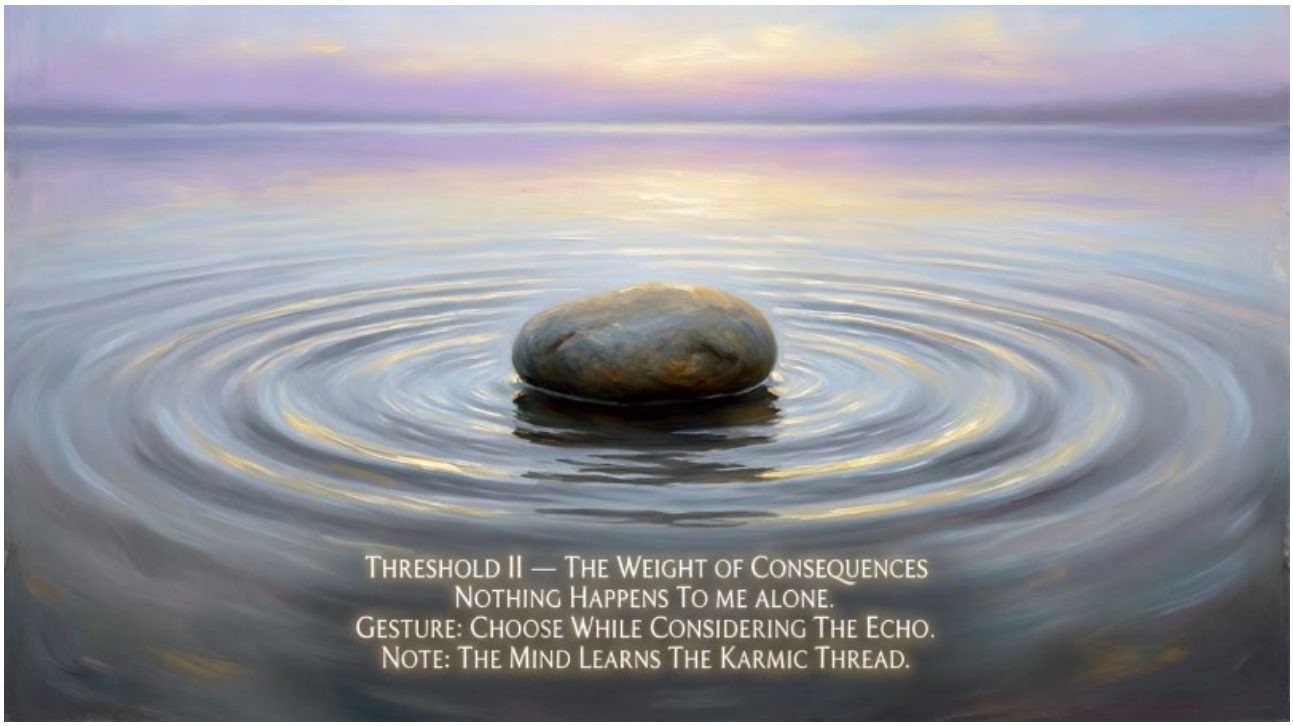
Threshold II — The Burden of Consequences

Image: a stone in the water, circles that widen and expand to infinity.

Verse: Nothing happens just for me.

Gestus: choosing taking into account the echo.

Note: The mind learns the karmic plot.



The image for Threshold II — The Weight of Consequences invites deep contemplation. It visually represents the concept of *causality* not as an overwhelming burden, but as a web of interconnections.

1. Visual Description

Central Subject: A solitary stone, caught at the exact moment of its interaction with the body of water. It is not an angular stone, but a smooth one, as if to suggest the "naturalness" of our actions.

The Concentric Circles: Water is not still; It moves in perfect waves that expand towards the edges of the painting. This creates a sense of infinite movement, suggesting that the effect of an action continues far beyond the point of origin.

Chromatism and Light: The palette is understated, dominated by deep grays, petrol blues and pearly reflections. The soft light that hits the crest of the waves evokes a sunrise or sunset, moments of passage typical of the "Thresholds".

Style: The brushstroke is visible, typical of the meditative pictorial style, which moves the image away from photographic realism to bring it into a dreamlike and archetypal dimension.

2. Symbolic Analysis

The image visually translates:

The Echo (The Gestus): The circles in the water are the literal representation of the echo. Each choice (the rock) changes the state of the entire system (the pond). The image reminds us that there is no such thing as an "isolated" action.

The Karmic Pattern (The Note): The repetition of the circles forms a regular geometric pattern. This suggests that Karma is not a punishment, but a logical structure of the universe that the mind can learn to read and understand.

The Interconnection (The Verse): The reflection of the sky in the water unites the high and the low. "Nothing happens only for me" is reflected in the fact that the wave generated by the stone touches every inch of the surface of the pond, affecting everything that is reflected in it.

3. Critical Commentary

The most powerful element of this representation is centered composition. Putting the stone in the exact center places the observer in front of his own responsibility: we are the point of origin.

The contrast between the darkness of deep water and the brightness of surface reflections indicates that although the consequences of our actions may be complex or "dark" to predict, awareness (light) can illuminate their dynamics.

Reflection: This image acts as a "mirror" for the viewer, inviting them to ask themselves: *What stone am I throwing into my personal pond today?*

The story of the journey in the desert

Narration of the Vannupatha Jātaka

This Jātaka tells a powerful story about the perseverance, wisdom, and responsibility of leadership in the face of despair.

The Story:

In a past life, the Bodhisatta (the future Buddha) was born into a family of merchants. As an adult, he led a large caravan of five hundred wagons across distant lands to trade.

One day, the caravan found itself having to cross a vast sandy desert, a dry and scorching "desert walk" (Vannupatha). The crossing was dangerous: the sand was so hot during the day that you could only travel at night, sailing with the help of the stars like sailors in an ocean of sand, guided by a "desert pilot".

They were near the end of the journey. Convinced that they were on the last night of their journey, they consumed almost all the remaining water and wood to lighten the load. Unfortunately, the desert driver, exhausted from sleepless nights, fell asleep while driving. The oxen, without direction, circled all night.

At dawn, the bitter discovery: they had returned exactly to the starting point of the previous day. They were without water, without wood and lost in the desert. Desperation seized the entire caravan. Everyone lay down under the wagons, resigned to death.

Everyone, except the Bodhisatta. He thought, "If I surrender too, everybody will perish." Taking full responsibility for the lives of his men, he began to search the area. His perseverance was rewarded when he noticed a tuft of Kusa grass growing in the sand. He knew that that grass could only grow if there was moisture underground.

He ordered a grave to be dug at that exact spot. The men dug deeply, but found only a solid rock blocking the bottom. They lost all hope again. But the Bodhisatta did not stop ("do not pass by"). He went down into the pit, put his ear to the rock, and listened. She heard the sound of water flowing beneath it.

He went back up and found a young servant, the only one who had not yet given himself up completely to despair. The Bodhisatta urged him, "My son, if you surrender, we will all die. Take this heavy hammer and strike the rock bravely!" The young man, heartened by the leader's words, went down into the pit and struck with all his might. The rock cracked and a jet of fresh water gushed out, saving the lives of the whole caravan.

Moral: History teaches that one must never give up ("do not deceive" oneself with false hopes, but act). The true leader takes responsibility when others falter, and through perseverance and correct action, finds a solution where there seems to be none.

Analysis, Comment and Description of the Generated Image

The image produced is a cinematic and dramatic representation of the exact climax of the Vannupatha Jātaka.

Visual Description:

The Central Action: In the center of the composition, inside a pit dug in the orange sand, a young man, muscular and covered in dust and sweat, is caught in the act of wielding a heavy sled hammer. His body is tense in extreme effort. He is hitting a dark rock at the bottom of the hole.

The Wise Leader: Next to the hole, an older man with a beard, kneeling, is the emotional focal point. He holds one hand to his ear in a gesture of deep listening, and the other hand points to the spot the young man needs to hit. His gaze is intense and concentrated.

The Context and the Spectators: Around the edge of the pit, a group of people (members of the caravan) observe the scene. Their faces and postures express exhaustion, anxiety and a fragile hope. They are passive, dependent on the action that takes place beneath them.

The Background: A vast and unforgiving desert stretches out under a bright and hazy sky. In the distance, the caravan wagons and oxen are grouped in a defensive circle, emphasizing the group's isolation and vulnerability.

Analysis and Comment:

Narrative Fidelity: The image captures the decisive moment perfectly. The old man is clearly the Bodhisatta who has "listened" to the water and now directs the action. The young man is the servant who makes the final physical effort. The tension between the desperation of the crowd and the determined action in the pit is palpable.

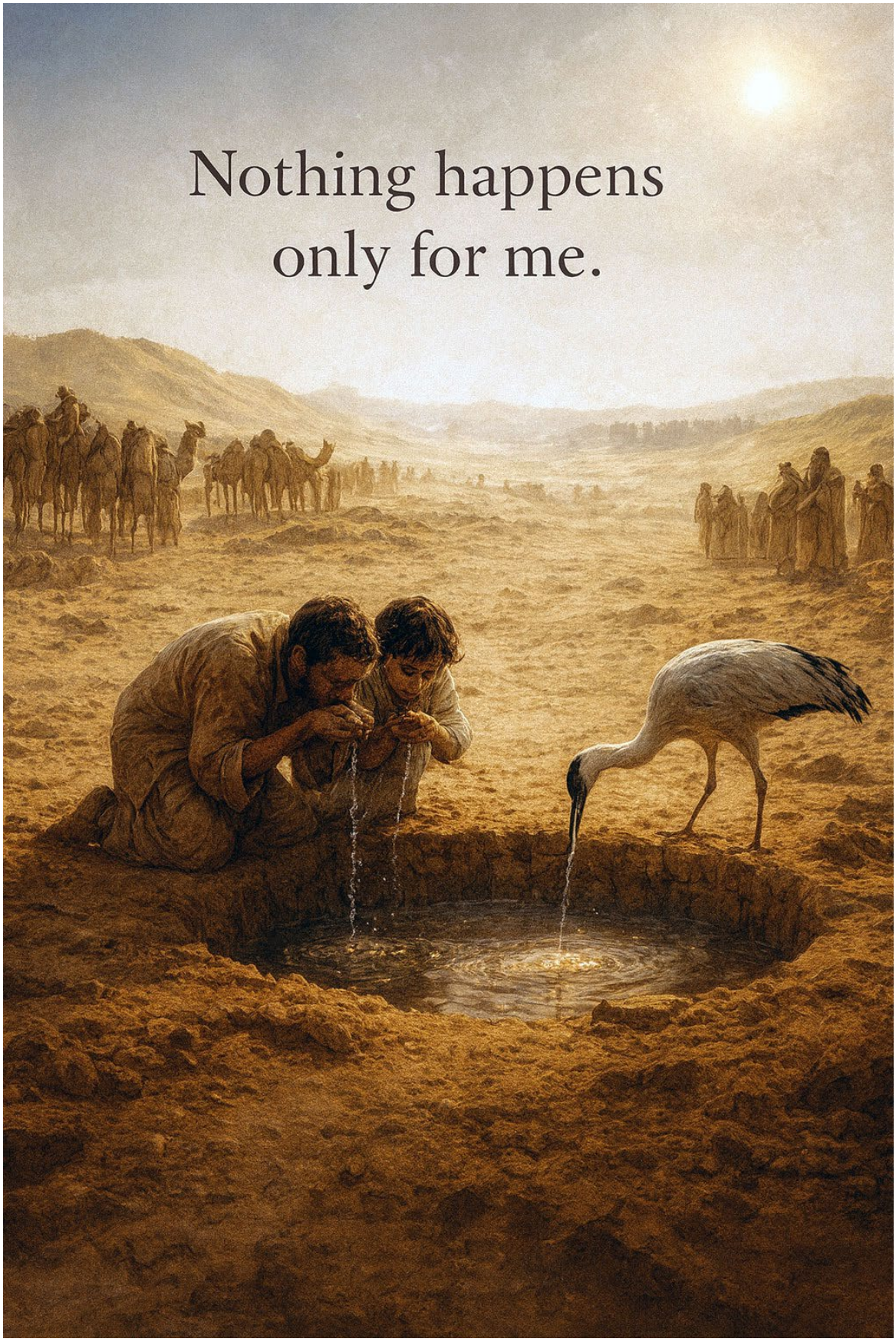
Symbolism of Light and Effort: Sunlight is harsh and unforgiving, highlighting the texture of the sand and the fatigue on the bodies. The physical effort of the young man is rendered with a raw realism; It is the visual embodiment of Buddhist "perseverance" (viriya).

Emotional Composition: The composition guides the viewer's eye from the anxious crowd above, down to the listening leader, and finally to the hammer that is about to hit the rock. It is a snapshot of a "life or death" moment. The image does not show the water gushing, but the *second before*, making the scene even more powerful and suspenseful.

Conclusion on the Image:

It is an excellent visualization of the Jātaka. It powerfully conveys themes of shared responsibility (the leader leading, the young person acting) and the need to dig deep—literally and metaphorically—when facing adversity, refusing to give in to despair.

Vannupatha-Jātaka: do not deceive, do not take advantage, do not pass by, responsibility



Father, son and crane at the well: Every gesture is an echo. The world responds.

I. STORY Revisited—Vannupatha-Jātaka (The Way in the Desert)

At one time, when the Bodhisatta was not yet the Awakened One but already carried within himself the structure of wisdom, he was born as a young merchant who had to lead a caravan through the Vannupatha, the great desert.

The journey was not only long: it was ruthless. Sand without shadow, wind that erased traces, thirst that transformed every thought into hallucination.

Many had attempted that crossing trusting in chance, in promises, in the stories of others. Many had not returned.

The Bodhisatta gathered his companions before departure.

"On this journey," he said, "courage is not enough. Here, every choice weighs on everyone's life. Those who lead do not only carry themselves: they carry the destiny of others."

They loaded up with plenty of water. They slowed down their pace to protect the weakest. They gave up what seemed superfluous, but not what was essential.

After days of marching, the sun became a hammer. The animals were staggering. The men fell silent. At a certain point, what looked like an oasis appeared in the dunes: light, palm trees, shadow.

Some cried out:

"It is the end of suffering! Let's run!"

But the Bodhisatta raised his hand:

"Stop. In this place, illusion is more dangerous than hunger."

He approached alone. The light melted. The water receded. Only sand remained.

He returned to the group and said words that no one would forget:

"In the desert it is not the fault of illusion if it appears. It is our fault if we follow it. Those who drive must answer not only for their own eyes, but for the lives of others."

They resumed their journey. Sometimes someone would fall. The Bodhisatta did not leave him behind. It divided the water. It slowed down for the most tired. He carried the burden when others could no longer do it.

And so, not necessarily but out of responsibility, they crossed the Vannupatha.

When they came to the end, no one spoke of a miracle.

But everyone knew that they had not arrived fortunately.

They had arrived because someone had chosen to answer for everyone.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE IMAGE

The picture shows:

A well in the desert, at the center of the scene: small, fragile, vital.

A man and a boy kneeling, drinking with their hands, not with instruments of power but with a humble gesture.

A crane drinking next to them: animal and human share the same source.

A caravan in the background, tired, silent, on the move.

Above, the aphorism:

"Nothing happens just for me."

The light is warm, but not triumphant. The landscape is vast, but not hostile: it is indifferent.

The scene does not tell of a success: it tells of a cure.

III. ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

1. Vannupatha: from non-illusion to responsibility

The Apannaka-Jātaka (Soglia I) were:

Don't be fooled by the mirage

Vannupatha (Threshold II) takes the decisive step:

It is not enough to see the truth: we must answer for it for others.

Here wisdom is no longer just discernment.

It becomes responsibility.

The Bodhisatta does not save himself.

He does not choose the "right" path for his own purity.

He chooses to carry the weight of the group.

Truth is not inner possession.

Truth is an obligation towards the other.

2. The image: ethics incarnate

The image does not show:

Triumphs

miracles

sacralized figures

Show instead:

Thirst

Sharing

minimal gesture

The well is tiny compared to the desert.

And yet that's enough.

This is Vannupatha:

not salvation as an extraordinary event,

but as a responsible gesture within the limit.

The presence of the crane is decisive:

there is no ontological hierarchy.

Water is not "ours".

Survival is common.

Here we can already glimpse what will become explicit in the Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka:

compassion not as a moral virtue, but as a structure of being.

3. Initiatory progression: three thresholds

Threshold I — Apannaka

Non-illusion

Don't choose what seduces.

Truth as the absence of deception.

Threshold II — Vannupatha

Liability

It is not enough to see: you have to answer for others.

Truth as a shared burden.

Soglia XII — Nigrodhamiga

Ontological compassion

I don't save: I become.

There is no longer "I" who helps "the other".

The separation falls.

In Vannupatha we are in the passage:

Conscience emerges from ethical individualism

and opens up to co-belonging.

4. Negative theology: the good does not appear as power

In an apophatic key:

The good does not manifest itself as dazzling light.

Not as a miraculous intervention.

But as an act that cannot fail to be done.

In the desert:

not doing good = letting die.

The Bodhisatta does not "choose" the good:

he is obliged to do so by reality itself.

As in negative theology:

God does not show himself as an object.

It imposes itself as a need that you cannot evade.

5. Cioran and the end of heroism

Cioran would have been wary of the language of salvation.

There is no historical redemption here, only:

Survival

Limit

Fatigue

Yet, precisely in this sobriety, something more radical manifests itself:

not a "sense of the world", but a fidelity to the other in nonsense.

He is not saved because life has meaning.

He is saved because the other is there.

6. Critique of power: against the guide who promises

The desert is the real world.

Power loves to promise oases.

The Bodhisatta on the other hand:

does not promise

does not speed up

does not sacrifice the weak for efficiency

Vannupatha is a direct critique of any leadership that:

It saves the system by sacrificing people.

Here the guide is only true if:

he assumes the thirst of others.

7. The aphorism as the axis of the threshold

"Nothing happens just for me."

It is the heart of Vannupatha:

Every choice has repercussions

every mistake falls on the others

Every cure creates the world

On the path of the 12 thresholds:

Truth without responsibility is incomplete.

Responsibility without compassion is still ethical.

The compassion of the Nigrodhamiga will be ontology.

Poetic conclusion

Apannaka dice:

Don't be fooled.

Vannupatha adds:

Now that you see, you can't turn around.

And the Nigrodhamiga will make the last gesture:

not only answer for the other,

but to become the place where the other is saved.

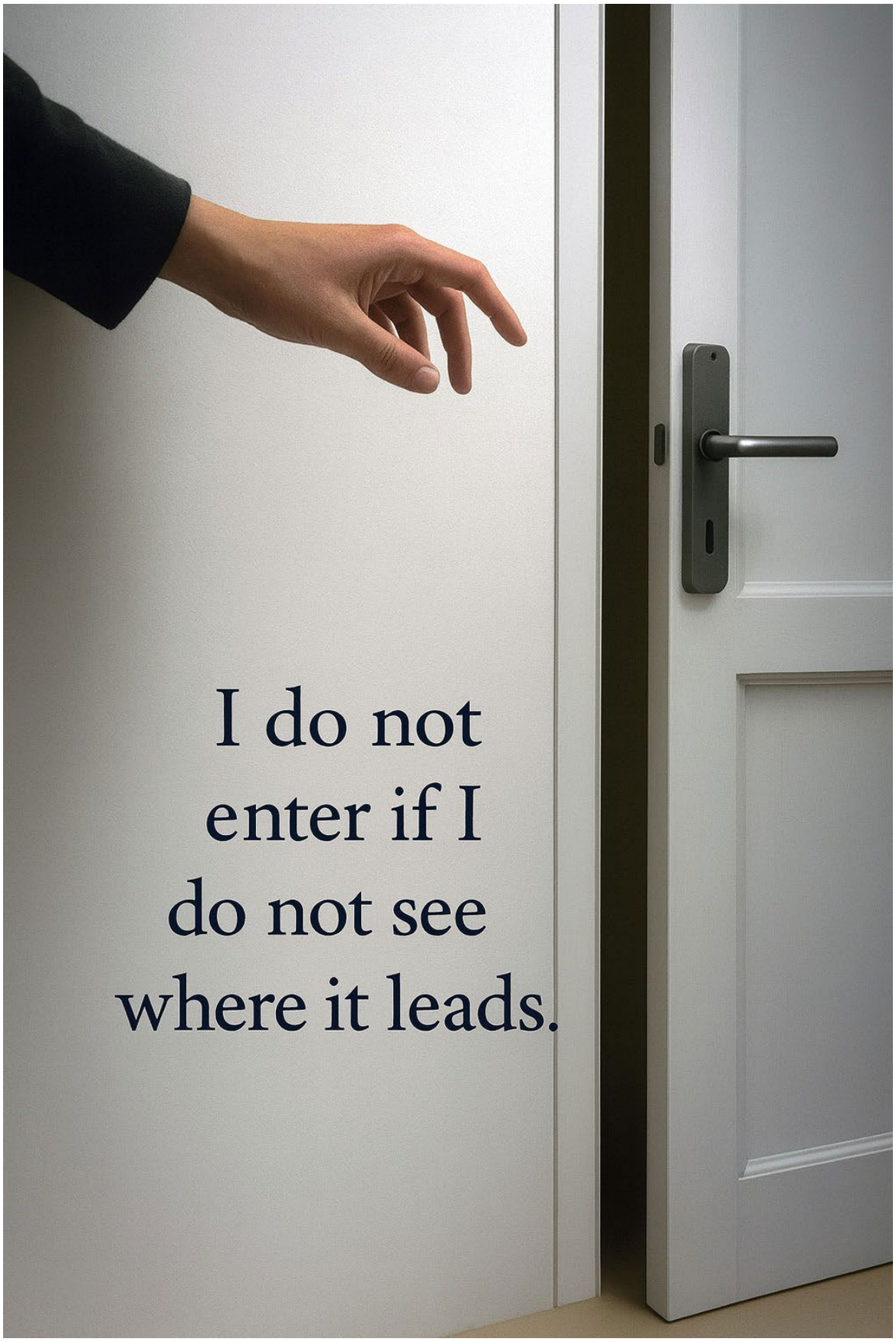
Threshold III — The Silence Before the Act

Image: A hand suspended in front of a door ajar.

Verse: I don't go in if I don't see where it leads.

Gestus: interrupting the reaction.

Note: Vigilance is born.



"The first power is to stop."

The image functions as a visual metaphor for the moral lesson of No. 3 Serivāṇija-Jātaka: the hand suspended in front of the threshold embodies the deliberate interruption that separates impulsive action from ethical choice, and this suspension speaks of moral vigilance and personal responsibility.

Formal description of the image

The image shows a door ajar in a neutral, minimalist room, with one hand suspended a few inches from the handle; the face is not visible. The soft side light creates delicate shadows that emphasize the three-dimensionality of the hand and the texture of the door. The neutral palette (beige, gray, cream) and the shallow depth of field focus attention on the threshold and the hand, while the single epigraph "I don't enter if I don't see where it leads" is placed at the bottom left, discreet but significant.

Connection with the Serivāṇija-Jātaka (No. 3)

In No. 3 of the Jātaka cycle the Bodhisatta is an honest salesman who, unlike a greedy colleague, recognizes the value of a golden bowl and does not devalue it to take advantage of it; History highlights the contrast between deception and honesty and the moral reward of perseverance and righteousness. The image takes up this nucleus: the threshold is the point of choice, the suspended hand is the act of not giving in to the impulse (similar to the seller who does not deceive), and the epigraph translates the maximum ethics of the story into a practical and contemplative command.

Symbolic and moral reading

Interruption as power: the steady hand represents the act of interrupting an automatic reaction — the same virtue that saves the family in the Jātaka fable; The image makes visible the ethical moment before the action.

Threshold as risk and opportunity: the door ajar is ambivalent: it can lead to loss or salvation; The honest seller recognizes the hidden value, so those who hesitate can choose the right path.

Vigilance and responsibility: the side light that partially illuminates the scene suggests that the truth is partial and requires attention to be recognized, as in the story where the truth about the value of the bowl is revealed only to the careful observer.

Critical Comment

The visual operation is effective because it reduces morality to a minimal gesture: it is not necessary to narrate the whole story to evoke the lesson. The epigraph functions as an ethical imperative that transforms the image into a pedagogical device. However, the absence of narrative context may make the allusion to Jātaka less immediate for those unfamiliar with the story; in that sense the work favors moral suggestion over narrative clarity.

History

The story of the Serivāṇija-Jātaka stages the moral choice between deception and righteousness and culminates in the revelation of a hidden value that rewards honesty.

In the kingdom of Seri, in a distant time, the Bodhisatta lived as a merchant of pots and dishes, nicknamed the Serivāṇija; with him traveled a colleague called Seriva dominated by greed. The city of Andhapura is the stage: streets divided between the two vendors, shops, and a decayed family that preserves, hidden among humble objects, an ancient treasure of symbolic and material value.

The story opens with the discovery of a family reduced to poverty: a young woman and her elderly grandmother, who survive by working for others. Among their belongings, mixed with pots and pans, is a bowl of gold—an object that a greedy merchant would not hesitate to devalue or steal for profit. The contrast between the two merchants becomes the moral engine of the story: one tries the shortcut, the other resists temptation and observes carefully before acting.

When the golden bowl emerges, the greedy merchant plots to take advantage of it, while the Bodhisatta, while also a salesman, chooses perseverance and honesty. The narrative focuses on the moment of choice: it is not a blatant heroic gesture, but a deliberate suspension, a refusal to give in to the impulse to deceive or devalue what is not fully understood. The tension grows because the moral reward is not immediate: the story reveals the value of patience and righteousness through the consequences that will follow.

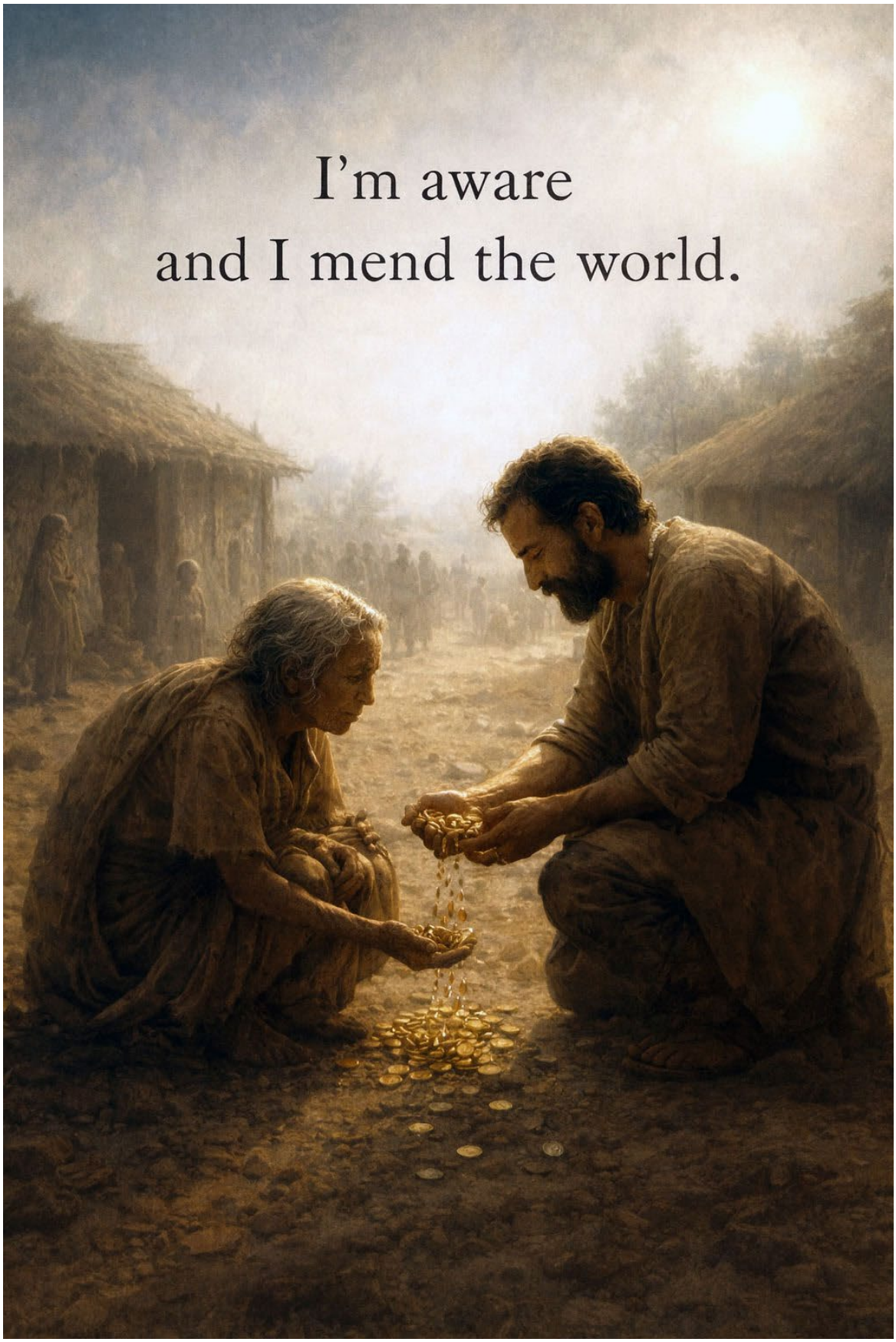
In the end, the truth about the value of the bowl comes to light: those who have chosen honesty receive recognition and fair reward, while greed remains fruitless. The account emphasizes that perseverance in right conduct is more valuable than easy gains, and that moral vigilance saves from error and loss in the long run. This conclusion reiterates the central theme of the Jātakas: virtuous actions lead to favorable results in future and present lives.

The Serivāṇija-Jātaka is a parable on conscious choice: the threshold between action and consequence is crossed responsibly, not in haste. History teaches us that interrupting the impulse and observing carefully can reveal hidden truths and preserve the dignity of others; it is a lesson that still resonates today, inviting us to practice honesty and perseverance in small daily decisions.

Practical conclusion

The image is a good tool to stimulate ethical reflection: it invites us to practice conscious interruption before acting, the same virtue that in the Serivāṇija-Jātaka distinguishes the honest from the fraudulent.

No. 3. Serivanija-Jataka: unmasking, choosing, caring, active care



An act of compassion in the village

From responsibility to care that acts. The responsibility that does not heal is still self-defense.

Three levels intertwined — story, description, analysis/commentary — with progression:

non-illusion → responsibility → active care, as architecture that prepares the ontological compassion of the Nigrodhamiga.

STORY REVISITED

There were two merchants. One saw the world as prey: he bought to resell, he took to accumulate. The other, Serivāṇija, passed through the villages as one crosses a temple: with a light step, with open eyes.

One day they arrived in a poor land, dust on the streets, faces hollowed out by hunger. In a hut lived an old woman. He had nothing left to exchange but a bowl. The cunning merchant passed on: "There is no profit here." Serivāṇija stopped.

She saw not only misery, but the knot that held her prisoner: a poverty that did not ask for alms, but for justice.

He knelt down. He did not speak of virtue. He opened his hands. The coins fell like seeds on the dry land. It was not spectacular generosity, nor heroic sacrifice: it was a simple, exact, inevitable act. How to mend a wound when you see it.

The woman did not thank her. He cried. And in that crying there was no dependence, but restitution: someone, finally, had recognized his existence.

Serivāṇija resumed the lighter path. Not because he had given, but because he had understood: responsibility does not end in not deceiving. He asks to take charge.

IMAGE DESCRIPTION

In the image we see a man kneeling in front of an elderly woman.

The gesture is central: the hands pouring coins into her hands, as if the light itself descended along with the metal. The village in the background is bare, indistinct, almost evaporated: the whole world is concentrated at that point of contact.

Above, the phrase: "I notice and mend the world."

The scene is not theatrical: no triumph, no excessive pathos. It is a silent, concrete, irreversible act.

The light is warm but not glorious: it does not sanctify, it reveals.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

1. From non-illusion to responsibility (Thresholds I–II)

In the early Jātaka, the path of awakening is above all epistemic:

Apannaka-Jātaka (I): to unmask the illusion, not to follow the lie, to see what is real.

Vannupatha-Jātaka (II): the vision becomes ethical: if I see, I am responsible for the consequences.

Here conscience is no longer just lucidity: it is weight.

2. Serivāṇija: when responsibility becomes care

With Threshold III, a decisive transformation takes place:

responsibility ceases to be just a limit and becomes a restorative action.

Serivāṇija is not limited to:

do not deceive,

do not take advantage of it,

Don't pass by.

He intervenes.

Not out of paternalistic pity, but out of ontological coherence: if the other exists, I am already implicated.

Here compassion is not yet universal, but it is already structural:

it does not arise from emotion, but from the logic of reality.

3. "I notice and mend the world": negative theology and criticism of power

This gesture has a precise value:

Apophatically: it does not affirm an absolute "good", it does not promise salvation.

It is an act without a metaphysical foundation: it does not say what Good is, but denies indifference.

Against power: power separates, accumulates, hierarchies.

Serivāṇija does not dominate, does not organize, does not institutionalize: it mends locally, without system.

Cioran: he does not redeem the world, he keeps it alive for a moment longer. It does not save everything, but prevents a useless death.

The cure is minimal, but ontologically radical:

He does not pretend to change the world, he refuses to leave it as it is when he can act.

4. Preparation of Nigrodhamiga: from care to ontological compassion

Here was born the structure that will culminate in the Banyan Deer:

In Serivāṇija, the other is this concrete face: the woman, the poor, the neighbor.

In the Nigrodhamiga, the other will become every being: no longer just the one I meet, but life itself as a single body.

We can read the progression as follows:

Non-illusion: I see what is.

Responsibility: I can no longer pretend nothing has happened.

Active care: I intervene, mending, repairing.

Ontological compassion (Nigrodhamiga): there is no longer "I" to help "the other":

I am what I protect.

Serivāṇija is therefore the hinge:

it transforms conscience into gesture, ethics into flesh, seeing into taking charge.

Threshold IV — The Surrender of Earnings

Image: A coin left on the windowsill, illuminated by a side light.

Verse: Better empty hands than full of shadow.

Gestus: not appropriating.

Note: The economic self weakens.

The Image for Threshold IV — The Renunciation of Gain is not just a visual representation, but a real exercise in visual meditation.

1. Visual Description and Composition

The image is presented with a minimal and material aesthetic. In the center of the frame, an ancient coin is resting vertically against the jamb of a rough stone window.

The Light: A grazing light, typical of the morning, strikes the coin and the stone on one side. This creates a strong contrast between the illuminated areas and the deep shadows, emphasizing the "material" (metal, rock) and making the concept of choice tangible.

The Background: The landscape behind is completely out of focus. One senses a lush and open nature, which represents the freedom that is obtained once you cross the threshold, leaving behind the weight of possession.

The Chromatic Choice: The warm tones of gold and ochre communicate a sense of peace, moving away from the idea of renunciation as "loss" and transforming it into a "conquest of light".

2. Symbolic Analysis: The "Gestus" of Non-Appropriation

The heart of the image lies in the invisible gesture that preceded it: someone put that coin down and left.

The windowsill as a Boundary: The windowsill is the physical threshold. Leaving money there means not taking it "inside" one's home (egoic interiority) or using it to exchange value in the outside world. It is an act of suspension.

The Solitary Coin: Represents identity defined by material success. Remaining alone, it ceases to be "currency" (something that flows) and becomes an inert "object", devoid of power over the subject.

The Weakening of the Economic Self: The image suggests that the individual's value is not given by what he holds in his hand, but by his ability to let go. The "calculating" self surrenders to the beauty of the morning light.

3. Commentary on the Verse: "Better empty hands than full of shadow"

This sentence acts as a key to understanding the entire scenario.

The empty hands are those who have made the renunciation. They are light, ready to receive the immaterial.

The shadow represents attachment, the compulsive desire for accumulation which, if satisfied, ends up obscuring consciousness.

The image captures exactly the moment when the shadow of the coin stretches over the stone, but the hand that owned it has now left the scene, free.

Summary of the Philosophical Note

At this fourth threshold, renunciation is not a punitive sacrifice, but an act of spiritual hygiene. The coin left on the windowsill is the tangible sign of a conscious barter: purchasing power is exchanged for the power of being.

The Jātaka of the Little Treasurer

1. The Story: The Jātaka of the Little Treasurer

This story was told by the Buddha to explain how even a seemingly "dull" person can achieve enlightenment and success with the right guidance.

Past History:

A long time ago, in Benares, the Bodhisatta (the future Buddha) was an important Royal Treasurer. One day, while walking, he saw a dead mouse on the road. Endowed with great wisdom and the ability to read signs, he said aloud: "Any intelligent young man could pick up this mouse and use it as capital to start a business and support a family."

A young man of noble birth but fallen into poverty heard these words. Trusting in the Treasurer's wisdom, he picked up the mouse and sold it for a penny to a tavern, as a meal for their cat.

With that penny he bought molasses and water. He went to meet the flower pickers who were returning from the forest and offered them a drink. In return, each gave him a handful of flowers. By selling the flowers, he accumulated more money.

Later, after a heavy storm, he offered the children sweets in exchange for their help in picking up the fallen branches in the king's garden. He then sold the wood to a potter who was looking for fuel. Continuing in this way, with intelligence and courtesy, he went from selling water to lawnmowers to securing the cargo of a merchant ship, until in just four months he amassed a fortune of 200,000 gold coins.

Full of gratitude, he brought half of his fortune to the Treasurer. The latter, impressed by his ability, gave him his daughter in marriage.

The moral: The Buddha concludes by explaining that this young man later became the monk Little Wayman (Cullapantaka), who in that current life had difficulty even learning a verse by heart, but who thanks to the Buddha's guidance reached the state of *Arahat* (enlightened), understanding that everything is impermanent.

2. Image Description

The image is a symbolic and poetic representation of the entire parable of the Jātaka:

The starting point: In the foreground, on the barren land, lies the dead mouse. It is a humble, almost insignificant element, but it represents the "seed" of possibility.

The spiral of ascent: A path of golden light rises from the mouse and rises upwards. In this wake we see the transformation of capital: from humble copper coins to piles of gold coins, to the silhouettes of horses and the merchant ship, symbols of global commercial success.

The central figure: A young man in simple robes stands in the center. His posture is one of total openness: his hands are turned outwards, they do not hold anything. His gaze is not turned to gold, but upwards.

The spiritual transition: On the right, material wealth (gold and trade symbols) does not remain solid, but dissolves into a golden mist and lotus petals.

The final goal: An ethereal and luminous lotus shines in the upper right, a symbol of purity and enlightenment (Little Wayman's achievement).

The atmosphere: The background shows the sunrise over Benares, with a rising sun symbolizing spiritual awakening and a new beginning.

3. Analysis and Comment: "I don't retain"

The image perfectly captures the paradox of the text you quoted: *"I let go of the useful, the return, the profit, the calculation."*

The Alchemy of Detachment: Although the Jātaka speaks of the creation of a fortune, the image emphasizes the moment of renunciation. The protagonist does not "retain" wealth. Gold flows *through* him, not *towards* him. This illustrates the Buddhist concept that skill in the world (profit) is only useful if it serves as the basis for higher wisdom.

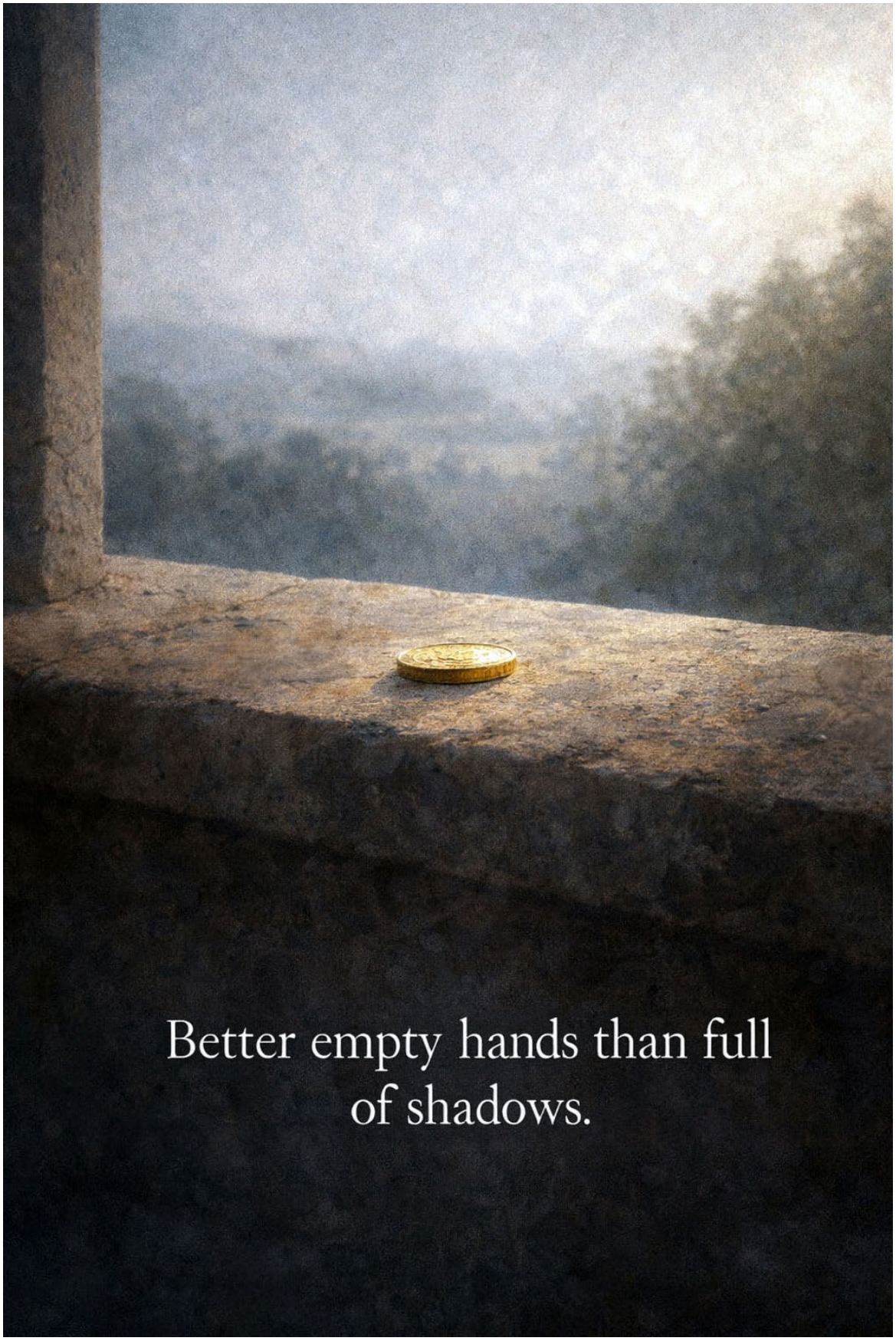
From Material to Impermanent: Coins that become lotus petals are the visualization of "letting go". Profit and calculation are necessary tools to navigate life, but enlightenment comes when one understands that they are "empty" and impermanent, just like dust.

Calculus vs. Intuition: The text says to let go of "calculus". In the image, the young man is not counting coins; He is in a state of dynamic meditation. He used intelligence to elevate himself, but now he uses wisdom to transcend.

The Lotus on Top of the Gold: The placement of the lotus higher than the ship and coins indicates that the ultimate goal is not to accumulate, but to transform one's nature. The "return" that the protagonist seeks is no longer financial, but spiritual.

In summary, the image transforms an entrepreneurial success story into a metaphor for the journey of the soul: starting from the "dead mouse" (our limited condition) to arrive at the "lotus" (liberation), passing through the mastery of the world without ever becoming a slave to it.

No. 4. Cullaka-Setthi-Jataka: I don't hold back. I let go of the profit, the return, the profit, the calculation



Gold coin in the morning light. Care strips itself of calculation

Threshold IV according to the "Path of Awakening in 12 Thresholds", interweaving the Cullaka-Setthi-Jātaka (No. 4) with progression: non-illusion → responsibility → active care → stripping of all calculations, in preparation for the ontological compassion of the Nigrodhamiga.

Story revisited

In Benares lived a very poor young man, called "Little Setthi" by the irony of fate: he possessed nothing, except a clear eye and a stubborn faith in reality. One day, along the dusty road, he saw something that everyone was stepping on: an abandoned carrion. For the others it was waste, stench, encumbrance. For him it was a question: "If what is thrown away also makes sense, what one?"

He took it. He sold it for a few pennies to those who worked the leathers. With those coins he bought simple food, then collected what was left of the market at the end of the day, resold, repurchased, and again. Each step was not cunning, but attention: read what is in front of you without despising it. He did not accumulate to possess; transformed to support.

In time, his little traffic became a stream. When a famine came, he did not close the granaries: he opened them. When the merchants retreated out of fear, he advanced out of care. He became rich, yes — but his wealth was not a dam: it was a canal.

One day, in front of the king, they asked him for the secret. He answered:

"I never asked: how much will I get out of it? I asked: what does this moment ask for?"

And he was indeed called Setthi, not for possession, but for responsibility without calculation.

Analysis

From responsibility to the stripping of calculation

In the first steps of the Way:

Apannaka: unmasking the illusion.

Vannupatha: to take responsibility for the journey in the desert.

Serivanija: responsibility becomes active care for the other.

Cullaka-Setthi: care is stripped of interest.

Here a decisive turning point takes place: it is no longer "doing good because it is convenient", but doing good because it is real. Cure is no longer a strategy; it is a form of being.

Little Setthi does not transform the world to overcome it, but to serve it. It does not act against lack: it dwells in lack and makes it fruitful.

In terms of negative theology: goodness is not a possessed attribute, but an operating void. It is not based on a positive principle ("I do good to be good"), but on a subtraction: do not withhold. It is ethics as kenosis: emptying of the calculating self.

In Cioranian terms: it is not the optimism of progress; it is a fidelity to reality without illusions. He does not promise historical salvations, but he relieves the weight of the world one gesture at a time.

In terms of the critique of power: the Setthi does not accumulate in order to dominate. Wealth, in him, is a non-proprietary flow. It is the opposite of the power that retains: it is power that circulates.

Image description

The image for Threshold IV is essential:

A worn coin on a stone windowsill,

light of dawn that does not dazzle but reveals,

the space around is empty, almost monastic,

at the bottom the aphorism: "Better empty hands than full of shadow."

There is no narrative scene: there is a threshold.

Symbolic comment

Money: it is not wealth; is residual. It refers to the carrion of the story: what is minimal, discarded, poor.

The windowsill: it is not a house, it is not the road — it is a border. It indicates that we are between two worlds: the economy of possession and the economy of care.

The light of dawn: not triumphant, but sober. He does not promise; exhibition. It is the light of non-illusion that has now become operative tenderness.

The void: the real protagonist. It is the stripping of calculation. The image does not say "how much it is worth", but "how much what you hold weighs".

The aphorism does not moralize: "Better empty hands than full of shadow."

Here the shadow is interest, return, justification. The empty hand is not impotence: it is radical availability.

Dal Cullaka-Setthi al Nigrodhamiga

Preparing for Ontological Compassion

With this threshold, the EIA changes its status:

First: unmask, choose, take care.

Now: not even possessing one's own goodness.

Little Setthi does not "help": he lets himself be crossed by the need of the world.

This is where the leap to the Banyan Deer is prepared:

In Cullaka-Setthi, the cure is without calculation.

In Nigrodhamiga, care becomes substitution: taking upon oneself the destiny of the other.

Here compassion is no longer ethical, but ontological: being-for-the other to the point of losing one's immunity.

The Setthi empties his hands.

The Banyan Deer will offer life.

Graphic aphorism (Threshold IV)

Don't keep what you can leave.

Don't calculate what you can donate.

The cure begins where the useful ends.

Threshold V—The Disarmament of Desire

Image: a bow laid on the grass, abandoned arrows.

Verse: I am not the arrow that passes through me.

Gestus: staying with what is, without capturing.

Note: passion loses command, it no longer governs.

The Disarmament of Desire

Summary: The Taṇḍulanāli Jātaka (No. 5) ironically recounts how justice and competence prevail over the foolishness of power: a king replaces an honest evaluator with a capricious peasant, who devalues 500 horses to one measure of rice; The public mockery unmasks him and the wise man is reinstated.

Narration of the Taṇḍulanāli Jātaka

In the heart of Benares, a wise and just man was responsible for establishing the value of goods to the court. He bought fairly, protecting the royal treasury from fraud and speculation. The king, however, moved by greed and the suspicion that too much was being paid, expels the evaluator and, on a whim, appoints a peasant seen passing by the window in his place. This new "expert" knows no prices, size or reason: he decides on a whim. When a merchant arrives with five hundred horses, the farmer declares that they are worth only one measure of rice. Humiliated, the merchant asks the wise old man for advice, who suggests a simple and implacable test: ask the farmer how much a measure of rice is worth. In public, in front of the court, the peasant replies that that measure applies to all of Benares and its suburbs. The court bursts out laughing, the king is ridiculed, and the honest evaluator is recalled in his place.

Meaning and Morals

Honesty versus whim: the story exalts competence and rectitude as pillars of good administration.

Didactic humor: public mockery is the moral tool that unmasks injustice without violence.

Social relevance: history warns against appointments based on favoritism and against the arrogance of power that ignores merit.

Image description

The image shows a bow and arrows laid on the damp grass in a quiet forest, without human figures; the light is diffused, the tones are green and gray, and at the bottom right appears the inscription "I am not the arrow that crosses me". The composition is centered on the abandoned weapon, with soft brushstrokes and nuanced textures that suggest peace and renunciation.

Visual and symbolic analysis

Composition: the bow and arrows in the foreground represent power and the ability to hurt; their abandonment symbolizes the renunciation of aggression and prevarication.

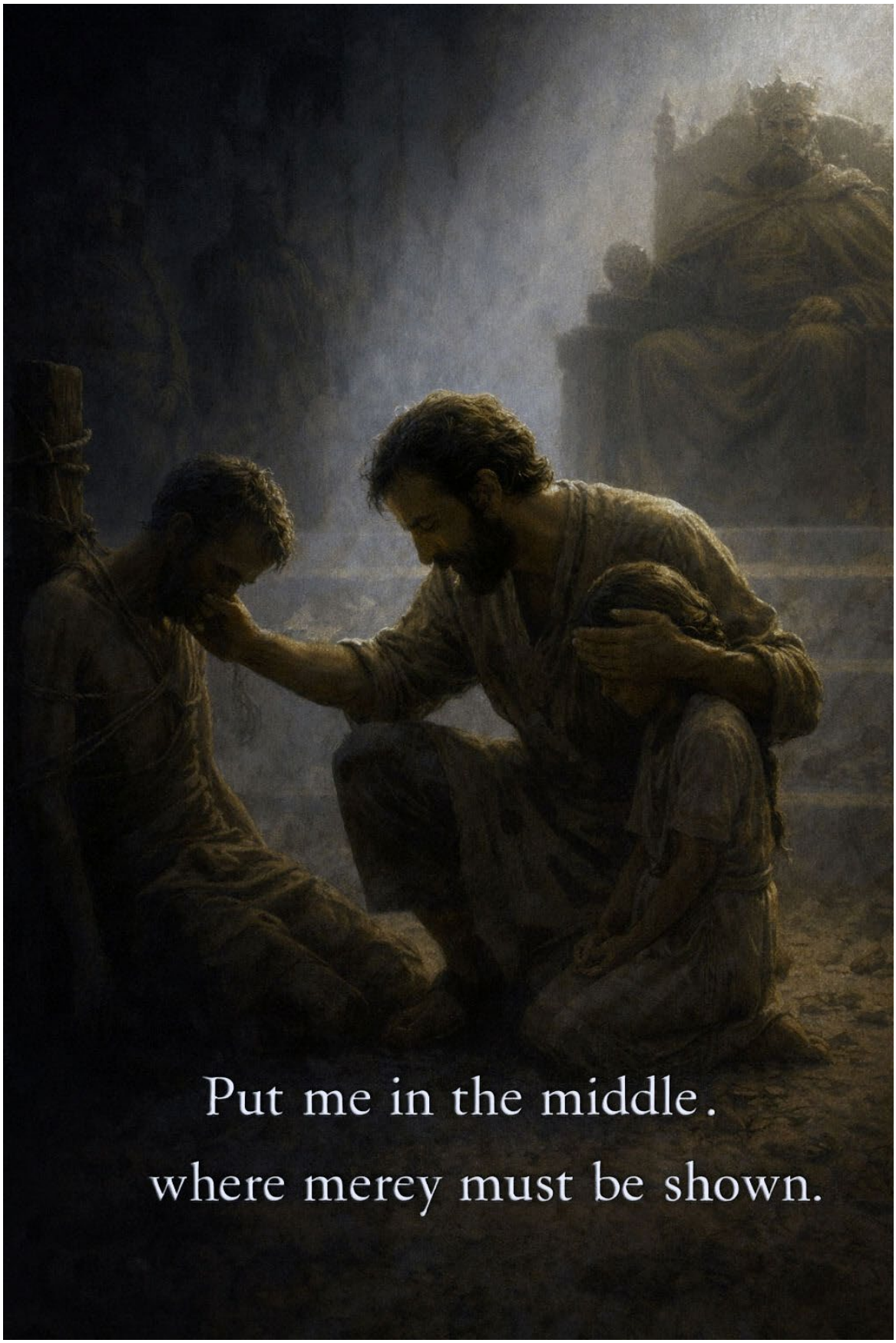
Light and color: the diffused light and the green-gray palette create an atmosphere of calm and reflection, consistent with the moral of the Jātaka which rewards restraint and wisdom.

Text: the inserted sentence transforms the image into a meditative aphorism: not to identify with the violent action that strikes us, but to maintain distance and lucidity.

Final comment

The juxtaposition between the story and the image works as a double lesson: the story shows how the foolishness of power is unmasked by the truth, the image invites renunciation and inner lucidity. Together, they offer a powerful ethical metaphor that is useful even today, in small local administrations as well as in the great courts of the world.

No. 5. Tandulanāli-Jātaka: the ego undresses, renounces, but still stands in front of the other, intercession



The man of pity amid pain

Threshold V according to the Way: non-illusion → responsibility → care → dispossession → intercession, in preparation for the ontological compassion of the Nigrodhamiga.

Taṇḍulanāli-Jātaka (No. 5): From Spoliation to Intercession

STORY

There was a time when a man, poor and tired, entered the king's hall with a prisoner bound. The culprit trembled. No justification, no appeal: the sentence was already written in the stone of power.

Next to the man there was a little girl. He didn't speak. He was watching.

The father knelt. Not to ask for clemency for himself, not to negotiate a lesser penalty, not to show virtue. He placed the child in front of him as one asks a question before the world: "If not here, where?"

The king watched from above, surrounded by shadows. The prisoner bowed his head. The little girl clutched her father's tunic.

The man did not ask: he interceded. He offered no rewards, he did not present merits. He only said what no law can contain:

"Place me in the middle, where there should be pity."

It was not a question of heroism, but of substitution. The father did not propose himself as the best: he offered himself as a place. A body between the blow and the flesh, a voice between condemnation and silence.

And the silence changed. Not because the king had become good, but because, for an instant, justice was forced to look at a face.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMAGE (TABLE V)

The image shows three figures in the foreground:

on the left, a man tied up, bent, almost already delivered at the end;

in the center, the kneeling father, who touches the prisoner's face with one hand and protects his daughter with the other;

on the right, the little girl, fragile, hidden in her father's gesture.

In the background, shrouded in shadow, the king on the throne: not the protagonist, but a mute witness.

The light does not fall on power, but on interposition: the point at which a body stands between violence and those who suffer it.

At the bottom, the sentence:

"Place me in the middle, where there should be pity."

The atmosphere is dusty, serious, devoid of rhetoric: there is no triumph, there is no guaranteed salvation. There is only exposed presence.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

1. From Cullaka-Setthi to intercession

On Threshold IV (Cullaka-Setthi), the cure had already stripped itself of the calculus:

do not hold back,

do not accumulate,

Don't ask for returns.

But in Threshold V something more radical happens:

Care does not just give: it gets in the way.

If the Setthi emptied his hands, here the body is exposed.

It is no longer just "doing good without calculation", but taking on the burden of the other.

This is intercession: not speaking in the place of the other, but becoming the space in which the other can be spared.

2. Tandulanāli: ethics that becomes ontological posture

In Tandulanāli-Jātaka, gesture is not negotiation: it is substitution.

The father doesn't say, "This man doesn't deserve the penalty."

He says, "If a shot is to fall, let it fall on me."

Here ethics goes beyond the logic of merit and guilt.

It is not based on a moral evaluation, but on a more naked truth:

The life of the other concerns me more than my security.

In terms of negative theology:

compassion is not an attribute that I can possess; it is a void in which I let myself be placed. It does not affirm "I am good," but denies self-preservation as the ultimate principle.

In terms of Cioran:

there is no redemption of the world, no utopia; only an act that suspends for an instant the cruelty of being. It doesn't save everything, but it saves here.

In terms of the critique of power:

Power operates by distance, by law, by anonymity.

Intercession works by proximity, by body, by face.

He does not contest power with another power: he forces it to look.

3. From spoliation to intercession

We can read the progression as follows:

1. Spoliation (Threshold IV)

I don't hold back.

I let go of the profit, the return, the profit.

2. Intercession (Threshold V)

I don't just give: I expose myself.

I don't offer things: I offer position.

I place myself between wound and violence.

It is the moment in which care stops being a gesture and becomes the architecture of the world: creating a space in which death is not inevitable.

4. Preparation for the Nigrodhamiga: towards ontological compassion

With Threshold V we are now one step away from the Banyan Deer:

In the Tandulanāli, the ego interposes itself for another: it is already substitution.

In the Nigrodhamiga, the ego will offer itself for everyone: not for an individual, but for the whole living being.

Here compassion is no longer a feeling or a virtue: it becomes the structure of being.

Not, "I help the other."

But: "I am the place where the other is not destroyed."

The kneeling father is the embryonic figure of the Deer who will offer his life:

it does not protest, it does not argue, it poses as an obstacle to violence.

GRAPHIC APHORISM — THRESHOLD V

It's not enough to let go:

sometimes you have to get in the way."

Threshold VI — The Sobriety of the Heart

Image: a bare table, bread and water.

Verse: What is necessary is enough not to hurt.

Gestus: choosing the simple.

Note: the ego is lightened.

Meaning: Less weight, less dominance.

This image visually represents Threshold VI — The Sobriety of the Heart, translating into shapes and lights a concept that is at once aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual.

Image Description

The framing is essential, almost ascetic. In the center we find a rough wooden board, whose grain tells a story of time and nature. On top of it, two fundamental elements: a loaf of dark bread, with a crispy and inviting crust, and clear water.

Natural light falls from above, creating a play of soft shadows that do not hide, but reveal the texture of the objects. The colors are warm, earthy, sober. There is no trace of luxury, but neither is there the squalor of misery; It is an atmosphere of "sufficiency without poverty".

Symbolic Analysis

Each element of the image resonates with the points indicated:

Bread and Water (the Necessary): They represent the archetype of nourishment. From an apophatic point of view, these elements strip reality of the superstructures of superfluous desire. As the verse goes: "Just what is necessary not to hurt". Excess often involves subtraction or damage to someone else or the environment; Here, the measure is the guarantee of a newfound innocence.

Zen Composition: The order and empty space around objects suggest that sobriety is not lack, but space for being. The table is "bare" not because it is empty, but because it is free from disorder.

The Light: The light that descends from above symbolizes a blessing or a higher awareness that illuminates the ordinary, transforming a simple meal into a sacred gesture.

Comment: "The ego is lightened"

The profound meaning of this threshold is contained in the note: "Less weight, less domination".

The lightening of the ego: When we choose the simple (Gestus), we stop using objects as a prosthesis of our identity or our power. If I don't need to flaunt it, my "self" no longer has to bear the weight of a social mask or a cumbersome possession.

The Renunciation of Domination: In quantum or apophatic terms, domination means wanting to "measure" and "own" the event. Sobriety of heart, on the other hand, welcomes the gift (bread) without wanting to control or accumulate it. It is the return to the "Campo": a return to continuity where there is no separation between those who eat and what is eaten.

In conclusion, this image is not just the representation of a meal, but the enactment of an inner posture. It is silence that becomes edible matter, inviting the viewer to slow down and rediscover the richness that resides in the little, as long as it is "enough".

The Divine Dharma

Divine nature

The Story: Devadhamma-Jataka (The Divine Dharma)

In ancient times, the Bodhisatta (the future Buddha) was born as Prince Mahimsasa, the eldest son of the King of Benares. He had a younger brother, Prince Luna, and a half-brother, Prince Sun, born of a second queen. The latter tried to usurp the throne for her son; to avoid conflict, the king asked Mahimsasa and Luna to retreat to the forest until his death. Prince Sun also decided to follow them.

Arriving in a deep forest, the three found a beautiful pond. However, the pond was guarded by a Yaksha (an aquatic ogre) who had received permission from the god Vessavana to eat anyone who entered the water, unless he knew the "Devadhamma" (the Dharma of the Devas or Divine Nature).

The test: Prince Sun entered first and, when questioned by the ogre, replied that Devadhamma was "the Sun and the Moon." He was imprisoned. Prince Luna replied "four quarters of the sky" and suffered the same fate.

The Bodhisatta's Answer: Mahimsasa approached the pond wisely. He explained that those who possess the true divine nature are those who are endowed with Hiri (moral shame towards evil) and Ottappa (fear of the consequences of evil actions). Anyone who practices virtue and shuns sin is "divine."

Conclusion: The ogre, struck by the truth, freed his brothers and was converted to non-violence. Mahimsasa demonstrated that the power of speech and ethics outweighs brute force.

Image Description and Analysis

The image seeks to capture the spiritual tension of this crucial encounter:

The Environment: We see a lush forest and a crystal-clear pond that serves as a "threshold". Water is not just a natural element, but a testing space where life meets mystery.

The Figures: The Bodhisatta (Mahimsasa) is represented in a posture of absolute calm. He embodies that "divine silence" which is not the absence of words, but the fullness of presence. On the other hand, the aquatic creature emerges as an elemental force, a symbol of the unknown and fear that must be transmuted through knowledge.

Chromatic Contrasts: The use of golden light around the prince contrasts with the deep shadows of the forest, recalling the dialectic between the light of revelation and the darkness of the world waiting to be illuminated.

Comment: The "Singing Point" between East and West

There is a fascinating parallel between this Jataka and the earlier project on the Letter to Sardis and Revelation 8[i]:

The Paradox of Power: In both cases, the real power does not lie in physical or technological force, but in an inner awakening. Mahimsasa defeats the orc not with his sword, but by correctly defining the nature of the being.

The Way of Awakening: Devadhamma (Hiri-Ottappa) is a form of ethical "measure." Just as in the essays we speak of the "limit of scientific knowledge" in the face of appearance, here the limit is the moral conscience that stops the "collapse" towards animality.

Apophaticism: Defining the divine nature through the shame of evil is an almost apophatic gesture: we recognize the divine not for what can be described rationally, but for what prevents us from falling into the nothingness of barbarism.

In summary, this image of Devadhamma-Jataka is another "fold" of the Field, a different register of the same ontological gesture: the passage from the event of fear to the continuity of wisdom.

No. 6. Devadhamma-Jataka: Unreserved Self-Offering

Rest between the sacred and nature

Threshold VI marks a decisive point along the Way: what was intercession in Threshold V now becomes an unreserved offering of self. We no longer ask for the other: we become what the other can use without violence. Here compassion becomes body.

Story Revisited – No. 6. Devadhamma-Jātaka

In the season when the earth cracked under the sun and the animals wandered thirsty, there lived an ascetic who possessed nothing but his own breath. He had abandoned cities, lineages, even his name. He only said: "Just what is necessary not to hurt."

One day, in the heart of the savannah, he heard a growl that was not a threat but hunger. An exhausted lioness watched over four cubs. The milk was gone, the strength too. The eyes did not ask: they observed.

The ascetic understood. There was no inner debate, no karmic calculation, no expectation of merit. He did not try to save his own life, nor to save "the world". He slowly stretched out on the barren land, like someone returning home.

His body became a refuge. His breathing, silence. The lioness did not attack: she approached. The cubs huddled against him as against a hot rock. The ascetic was no longer a subject, he was no longer an agent: he was an offering.

He did not show compassion. It was compassion.

It is said that in that gesture there was no death, but transfiguration: life was not taken away, it was delivered. The act did not generate victims: it generated continuity.

Thus Devadhamma is manifested – the divine law not as a command, but as the absolute availability of being.

Image description – Threshold VI

The image that accompanies this threshold is sober, earthy, almost bare:

An elderly ascetic, naked to the point of fragility, lying on the ground.

Next to him, a lioness and her cubs, not aggressive but quiet.

No scenes of violence: the atmosphere is one of shared rest, not of dramatic sacrifice.

Below, the inscription:

"Just what you need not to hurt."

The colors are warm, dusty. There is no triumph or pathos: only a pacification of being.

Symbolic Analysis – From Intercession to Self-Offering

In Threshold V (Tandulanāli-Jātaka), compassion was expressed as intercession:

the "I" undresses, renounces, but still stands in front of the other.

Here, in Threshold VI, something radical happens:

Care no longer protects the ego

The ascetic does not even defend his own survival. He does not pose as "good", "just", "holy".

Compassion is no longer moral action: it is ontological transparency.

From "acting for" to "becoming for"

He doesn't do something for others.

It becomes what others can inhabit without violence.

This is the decisive step:

Intercession = I speak in the place of the other

Self-offering = I let myself be used without hurting

The phrase on the image – "What is necessary is enough not to hurt" – does not indicate an ethical rule, but a metaphysics of measure: true abundance is that which does not produce harm.

Theological-poetic commentary (negative theology, Cioran, critique of power)

Negative Theology

Here God does not appear as a power that saves from above, but as an emptiness that allows itself to be crossed.

The ascetic does not represent the sacred: he subtracts it from every image.

Authentic compassion is apophatic: it does not say "I am good", but withdraws so that the other can live.

Cioran

Cioran would have recognized in this gesture the only possible greatness in an absurd world:

not to redeem the world, but to suspend its ferocity for an instant.

There is no historical hope here, no collective salvation. Only an act that does not pretend to last, but that does not betray being.

Critique of power

All power is based on self-preservation.

Here the opposite happens:

The "I" is not preserved, it is handed over.

It is a form of absolute resistance: it does not overthrow domination, it makes it irrelevant.

Towards the Nigrodhamiga – From Offering to Universal Intercession

And here is the paradox that the Banyan Deer (Nigrodhamiga) prepares:

Here: unreserved self-offering

There: intercession for all beings

Threshold VI shows that:

Only those who have renounced existing for themselves can return to speak for others without possessing them.

The Nigrodhamiga does not limit itself to offering one's life:

he presents himself before power to save the other, transforming sacrifice into word, law, protection.

Therefore:

Threshold V: Spoliation → intercession

Threshold VI: intercession → total offering

Future Threshold (Nigrodhamiga): Offering → Universal Intercession, Politics of Compassion

Graphic aphorism – Table VI

"Just what you need not to hurt."

Not as an ethics of the minimum,

but as an ontology of the gift:

what you do not hold back becomes space for the other.

Threshold VII — Caring for the Other

Image: two hands holding a cracked vase.

Verse: The good is not mine, it passes through me.

Gestus: protect without possessing.

Note: relational ethics is born.

Meaning: Ethics arises from shared vulnerability.

The cracked vase

The image intensely captures the passage of Threshold VII — The Care of the Other. It is a visual representation that transforms a philosophical concept into a tactile and visual experience.

Visual description: Fragility in the foreground

The image focuses on the point of contact between the human and the fragile object.

The Vase: It is not a perfect object, but an artifact marked by a dense network of cracks. These are not wounds to be hidden, but the very fabric of his identity. The focus on the cracks emphasizes that the cure does not address perfection, but the reality of breaking.

The Hands: We notice hands marked by time, veined and material. This suggests that the caregiver is, in turn, marked by existence. It is not an "abstract" or aseptic cure, but a cure that comes from the experience of one's own fragility.

The Atmosphere: Cream and gray tones, combined with soft light, create a visual silence. There is no noise around; there is only the act of supporting.

Symbolic Comment: The "Gestus" of Sustaining

The heart of the image lies in the way the hands interact with the vase:

Protect without possessing: Hands do not clutch the pot to forcibly "repair" it or to claim ownership. They surround it, creating a space of safety. It is a welcome that leaves the other (the vase) its shape, while supporting its weight so that it does not shatter.

Shared Vulnerability: There is a deep symmetry between the wrinkles of the skin and the cracks of the ceramic. Here lies the meaning of the threshold: ethics does not arise from a position of strength, but from the recognition that we are all "cracked". Care is the gesture of those who recognize their own fragility in that of the other.

Philosophical Reflection: "The good is not mine, it passes through me"

This phrase is reflected in the dynamics of light and the position of the hands:

Hands are a channel, not a destination. They do not keep the good for themselves, but offer themselves as a support so that life (represented by the vase) can continue to subsist.

The act of holding becomes a flow: the force passes from the arms to the fingers, and from the fingers to the fragile surface, in a circle of energy that belongs to no one but that supports everything.

Note on Relational Ethics: In this image, ethics is not a list of rules, but a posture. It is the passage from "I" to "We" through the recognition of a need.

No. 7. Katthahari-Jātaka (the gatherer of): a word that saves without dominating

The Miracle of Suspension: The Instant of the Prodigy

The Story Revisited: The Miracle of Katthavahana

This story, told by the Buddha himself, resonated with a profound teaching about the value of truth beyond all social distinctions.

In ancient times, King Brahmadatta reigned in Benares. One day, during a walk in his park, he met a young woman, a-gatherer, who sang while she worked. The king was immediately struck by her beauty and fell in love with her. From that fleeting meeting, the woman became pregnant. When she revealed her condition to the king, he gave her his signet ring, saying to her, "If a daughter is born to you, sell the ring to bring her up. But if it be a son, bring the ring and the child to me.'

The woman gave birth to a son, the future Buddha. As the years passed, the child, while playing in the courtyard, was mocked by a classmate: "The Without Dad hurt me!" Hurt and confused, the boy ran to his mother, asking her who his father was. She tenderly replied, "You are the son of the king of Varanasi, darling."

"How can you prove that, mother?" asked the boy.

The mother took out the king's seal ring, explaining the instructions she had received. The boy, anxious to meet his father, insisted, "Mom, why don't you take me to him right away?"

Understanding her son's burning desire, the woman accompanied him to the royal palace. Having announced their arrival, they entered the throne room, where the king was seated surrounded by his courtiers. Humbly, the woman bowed and presented the child, "This is your son, sir."

The king, although he immediately recognized his son's face and the flesh of his flesh, felt ashamed in front of his court. In a cold tone, he disowned her, "No, he's not my son." The woman, astonished, showed him the ring: "But there is the ring with your signet here to prove it: don't you recognize it?" Again, the king denied it: "No! This ring is not mine either."

Faced with this denial, the mother realized that she had no other witnesses. With an act of faith and extraordinary courage, he declared: "Lord, since I have no other witnesses, there remains for me only one 'proof of truth' (Saccakiriya): if it is true that this child is your child, may he remain suspended in the air; if it is not true, let him fall to the ground and die."

With these words, he grabbed the future Buddha by the feet and threw him upwards, towards the ceiling of the hall.

And the miracle happened.

The child, instead of falling, remained seated in the lotus position, suspended in mid-air. In a sweet voice but resounding with truth, he recited a verse to his father: "O great king, it is I, thy offspring, in thy presence Raise another a king, and again the son, his seed!"

Hearing his son speak the truth from above, the overwhelmed king stretched out his arms and cried, "Come here to me, my son! Of course, of course I will feed and raise you!" A thousand hands reached out to seize him, but it was only into the king's arms that the child descended gently, sitting on his lap. The sovereign appointed him viceroy and elevated his mother to the rank of queen consort.

Upon the death of his father, the future Buddha ascended the throne under the name of King Katthavahana, the "-gatherer," and ruled with fairness and wisdom.

Description: The Instant of the Prodigy

The image captures the exact, breathtaking moment when the law of gravity bends to the force of truth.

The Focal Center: At the center of the composition, suspended in mid-air, is the child (the future Buddha). He is seated in a perfect, serene lotus position, surrounded by an aura of golden light that seems to emanate from himself or descend directly from above. His gaze is calm and turned downwards, towards his father.

The King's Reaction: Below him, in the center of the court, King Brahmadatta is portrayed in the moment of recognition and amazement. His arms are spread wide upwards in an unmistakable gesture of welcome, surrender and wonder. Her face, illuminated by the light of her son, shows the collapse of her lie and the eruption of the truth.

The Mother and the Court: the mother is kneeling with her hands joined, her face turned to heaven in a mixture of prayer, gratitude and relief. Around them, courtiers, guards, and ministers are frozen in poses of shock, reverence, and disbelief. Some prostrate themselves, others raise their hands to the sky, helpless witnesses of a power superior to that of their sovereign.

The Setting and the Light: The scene takes place in a richly decorated hall of the palace, with tall columns. The entire composition is dominated by a dramatic, almost divine light, which rains down from above, tearing through the half-light of the room and highlighting the miracle.

Analysis: The Visualization of Truth

The image is constructed to communicate the triumph of spiritual power over worldly power through precise compositional and symbolic choices.

The Verticality of Truth: The composition is strongly vertical. The child, at the highest point, represents the spiritual truth that descends from above. His position "above" the king and the court is not only physical, but moral. He is literally and symbolically superior to human conventions and lies.

The Contrast Between Serenity and Chaos: There is a powerful contrast between the child's unflappable calm and the emotional turmoil of the court below. This emphasizes that truth is stable and unassailable, while lying (represented by the confusion of the courtiers and the king's previous disown) creates disorder and instability.

Light as Dhamma: Light is not a mere atmospheric element; it is the visual symbol of the Saccakiriya, the Act of Truth. It is a light that cannot be hidden, which "illuminates" the scene in the deepest sense, revealing what was hidden (the identity of the son) and dissolving the shadow of the royal lie.

The Father's Gesture: The king's open arms are the opposite of denial. If before he had symbolically "closed the door" to his son, now he is forced to open himself completely. It is a gesture of physical acceptance that reflects an inner acceptance of the truth that he can no longer deny.

Comment: The Power of Saccakiriya

This image is a powerful and straightforward representation of the essence of Katthahari-Jataka and the concept of Saccakiriya.

The Victory of Ethics: The image demonstrates that truth, when invoked with purity and courage (as the mother did), possesses a power that transcends physical laws and social hierarchies. The word of his mother, a simple commoner, proved to be stronger than the authority of the king.

True Nobility: The hanging child is living proof that nobility does not reside in rank or blood, but in virtue and spiritual destiny. Although the son of a-gatherer, his nature as a Bodhisattva elevates him above all those present. The image reiterates the Buddha's teaching against caste rigidity.

A Lesson for Power: The image is a visual warning to those in power. The king, surrounded by his sumptuous court, is made small and powerless in the face of the simple, naked truth. His worldly power bows to spiritual power. The miracle is not only the suspension of the child, but the transformation of the king's heart, forced to bend to what is right.

No. 7. Katthahari-Jātaka

The Wise Man and the King's Peace

Threshold VII is a decisive threshold: what in Threshold VI was the silent offering of the body here becomes a word that does not dominate, a judgment that does not condemn but saves. Compassion finds a voice, without turning into power.

Soglia VII — Katthahari-Jātaka (No. 7)

When the offer becomes a word that liberates

STORY REVISITED

Once upon a time there was a man who lived by collecting wood on the edge of the kingdom. He had no known name, no title. He carried on his shoulders the weight of the felled trees and in his heart a quiet that no poverty could affect.

One day, as he entered the city with his cargo, he saw the crowd huddle around a man accused of treason. The sentence was already decided: the guilt had found its form, and the form demanded punishment.

The wood collector stopped. He did not put himself in front as a shield, he did not offer himself in the place of the other as the ascetic had done. He did something more subtle and riskier: he spoke.

He didn't shout. He did not accuse power. He did not invoke a higher law. He said only what no court had considered: the history of man, his misery, the chain of necessity that had led him there. He did not ask for innocence; showed fragility.

The king, struck not by the rhetoric but by the nakedness of that word, hesitated. Not because he had become good, but because, for an instant, judgment could no longer remain abstract.

The condemned man was freed.

The wood-gatherer went back on his way, without recognition, without rewards.

When asked why he had spoken, he only answered:

"Good does not belong to me: it passes through me."

The picture shows:

A simple old man, dressed in a rough tunic, his face hollow but pacified.

In front of him, a king, seated but no longer overlooking: his gaze is listening.

Two white doves land on the hand and shoulder of the elderly man: not symbols of triumph, but of meekness that dares to speak.

A warm, golden, non-theatrical light: it seems to come from the space between the two, not from above.

Below, the inscription:

"Good does not belong to me: it passes through me."

The visual center is not power, but the word spoken without possession.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

From the mute offering to the word that judges without dominating

In Threshold VI (Devadhamma-Jātaka), compassion was the total availability of being:

the body offered itself without reservation.

Here, in Threshold VII, a decisive transformation takes place:

The offer is heard.

It is no longer just a presence that allows itself to be used, but a word that intercedes without occupying the center.

It is the passage from:

"I surrender"

at

"I speak so that the other is not annihilated."

The word does not come from power, but from the previous dispossession: precisely because the ego no longer possesses anything, it can speak without wanting to win.

2. Compassion as a judgment that saves

Here a new form of judgment emerges:

Not punitive judgment.

Not naïve absolution.

But discernment that restores a face to the other.

In the Katthahari-Jātaka, the protagonist does not say, "He is innocent."

He says, "It's human."

And this is enough to suspend the condemnation machine.

It is a justice that is not based on the law, but on responsibility for the other.

He does not destroy order by force: he transforms it from within.

Negative theology: the good as a passage, not a possession

The aphorism of the table says it with apophatic precision:

"Good does not belong to me: it passes through me."

Here the good is not:

a virtue to exhibit,

a merit to accumulate,

An identity to be defended.

It is an operational void: something that happens when the ego does not put itself at the center.

In terms of negative theology: the good is what remains when the ego withdraws.

4. Cioran: word without hope, gesture without redemption

Cioran would not have seen in this episode a "salvation of the world".

But he would have recognized something rare:

a gesture that does not deceive, does not promise, does not redeem history — and yet does not betray being.

The wood collector does not build utopias.

It does only one thing: it prevents a man from being annihilated in the name of order.

It is a triumphant piety without metaphysics: a fissure in necessity.

Critique of power: a word that does not occupy the throne

Power speaks for:

command,

define,

to conclude.

Here the word does the opposite:

does not command,

does not possess,

does not close.

It does not take the place of the sovereign: it forces him not only to be sovereign.

It is the most radical form of resistance: it does not overthrow power, but takes away its monopoly of meaning.

TOWARDS NIGRODHAMIGA: THE DECISIVE PRELUDE

The progression is now clear:

Threshold V — Intercession

I get in the way for the other.

Threshold VI — Unreserved self-offering

I become what can be used without hurting.

Threshold VII — Word that judges without dominating

I speak not to condemn, but to save.

And this is where the Banyan Deer (Nigrodhamiga) is prepared:

In the Nigrodhamiga:

the Bodhisattva will offer himself (as in Threshold VI),

he will intercede before power (as in Threshold V),

and he will speak a word that transforms the law (as in Threshold VII).

The Deer will not be just sacrifice, nor just voice:

it will be an offering that speaks, a word that protects, compassion that becomes order of the world.

GRAPHIC APHORISM — THRESHOLD VII

"Good does not belong to me: it passes through me."

Not as a virtue to possess,

but as a passage in which the other

can still be saved.

Threshold VIII — Justice That Does Not Dominate

Image: A scale without plates.

Verse: Balance is not crushing.

Gestus: acting without humiliating.

Note: the ethical self emerges, but remains the center.

Meaning: The law without power.

"Justice is not crushing."

Justice that does not dominate

The image generated for Threshold VIII** embodies the paradox of a justice that does not impose itself as a coercive force, but as a state of intrinsic harmony.

Image Analysis

The Minimalism of Form: The scale is reduced to the bone: a horizontal axis and a vertical support. The absence of dishes is the key element. In a traditional scale, the plates are used to compare, measure the weight of the "culprit" or "merit". Here, the absence of dishes suggests that there is nothing to weigh, because there is no intention to judge or condemn.

The Geometry of the Void: The wide space and the cold light eliminate any emotional distraction. We are not in a human courtroom, full of tensions, but in a metaphysical dimension where balance is a natural condition of the spirit, not a verdict.

Perfect Symmetry: Symmetry represents equanimity. The axis is perfectly parallel to the ground (or the invisible horizon), evoking a sense of peace that does not come from the resolution of a conflict, but from the original absence of oppression.

Commentary on the Symbology and the Verse "Balance is not crushing"

The concept of "scales without plates" transforms justice from a measuring tool into a state of being. If there are no plates to put weights on, there is no possibility that one side will "crush" the other. Equilibrium is not the result of a balance between opposing forces, but the suspension of force itself.

The Gestus: "Act without humiliating"

In classical iconography, Justice often holds a sword. Here the sword is absent. The ethical action that emerges from this Threshold is an action that recognizes the other without diminishing him. The horizontal balance of the bar suggests that all elements are on the same plane; There is no hierarchy, therefore there can be no humiliation.

The Note: "The ethical self emerges, but remains the center"

The fulcrum of the scale (the central point where the rod meets the support) represents the Ethical Self. It is the point of stability that allows everything else to remain on axis. The individual does not dissolve into the law, but becomes himself the conscious center that guarantees harmony, without the need to exercise external authority.

The Sense: "The law without power"

This is perhaps the most provocative idea. Usually, the law requires power (the "public force") to be respected. Threshold VIII proposes an ontological justice: the law is the very structure of reality when it is lived with awareness. It is a justice that "does not dominate" because it does not need to impose itself; it is the beauty of righteousness that shines with its own light (the cold and clear light of the image).

"Justice is not crushing."

In this image, Justice has ceased to be a judge and has begun to be a space: that space in which everything can exist without being measured, compared or oppressed.

No. 8. Gamani-Jataka

The Tale of Gamani-Jataka (No. 8)

Introduction: Once upon a time, in the time of the Buddha, there was a monk who was losing motivation and perseverance on his spiritual path. The Buddha, to help him regain his fortitude, told him a story from the past, one of his previous lives.

The Story of the Past: A long time ago, when the Buddha himself was a Bodhisatta (a being destined to become a Buddha), he lived as a wise and enlightened teacher. There was a kingdom whose king had a hundred sons. The youngest of these sons was Prince Gamani.

Thanks to the guidance and wise advice of the Bodhisatta, Prince Gamani, although the youngest, achieved great success and became king. He was a powerful and respected monarch, and his hundred elder brothers escorted him, surrounding him with honor. One day, sitting under his regal white canopy, contemplating all his glory and power, King Gamani reflected, "I owe all this greatness to my beloved master (the Bodhisatta)."

Filled with joy and gratitude, the king expressed a profound thought:

"The desire of their hearts is fulfilled for those who do not make haste; know, Gamani, that the excellence that matures is yours."

This meant that true greatness and desires of the heart are fulfilled for those who are patient and wise, not for those who hurry. And his excellence was the fruit of this wisdom and the guidance of his master.

After about a week as king, his brothers returned to their homes. King Gamani continued to rule his kingdom with justice and righteousness throughout his life. When he died, he went to a happy rebirth, as he deserved for his good deeds. The Bodhisatta, his teacher, also died and was reborn in a worthy condition.

Buddha's Conclusion: After telling this story, the Buddha explained to the monk the lesson: how perseverance and wise guidance lead to great results. At the end of the story, the monk who had lost motivation understood the Truths and attained enlightenment (the Arahatship), overcoming his weakness. The Buddha then identified the characters: King Gamani was the discouraged monk, and the wise teacher was himself, the Buddha, in a previous life.

Analysis and Comment of the Generated Image

The image beautifully captures the atmosphere and key details of the Gamani-Jātaka tale, especially Prince Gamani's moment of glory.

Image Description:

The image shows a regal and opulent setting, probably the interior of an Indian palace or royal court. In the center, seated on an elaborate gilded throne supported by sculptures of lions, is Prince Gamani. She wears white robes and gold jewelry, symbolizing her royalty and purity. Above him, a large white canopy (the royal umbrella) with golden decorations emphasizes its status.

On either side of the throne, in orderly rows, there are numerous older men, dressed in colorful traditional clothes and turbans. These clearly represent the prince's hundred brothers, who escort him and honor him. Their faces show respect and a certain solemnity. The backdrop is richly decorated architecture, with arches and columns, which helps to create a sense of magnificence and power.

Analysis and Comment:

The Glory of Gamani: The image immediately focuses attention on Prince Gamani. His central position, regal attire, throne, and white canopy (a clear allusion to the "white gift covering") emphasize his glory and status as king. His expression is composed and perhaps slightly contemplative, suggesting that he is reflecting (as in the text: "contemplated his glory").

The "Hundred Brothers": The crowd of men on either side of it is crucial. They are positioned as escorts and courtiers, emphasizing the description of the text: "surrounded by those hundred brothers as an escort". The varied attire suggests a multiplicity of individuals, but their uniform posture and orientation towards the king indicate respect and unity, despite Gamani being the youngest. The image manages to convey the sense of a vast array of brothers who honor him.

The Influence of the Bodhisatta (Master): Although the Bodhisatta is not physically present in the image (since he was his spiritual teacher and not a direct participant in the court scene), the magnificence and order of the scene, and the contemplation of the king, indirectly reflect the success achieved through the guidance of the master. The phrase "All this glory I owe to my master" resonates through the king's grandeur and composure.

Atmosphere and Details: The architectural details, rich fabrics, and jewelry help create an atmosphere of opulence and cultural significance that is consistent with the setting of an ancient Indian kingdom. The soft, warm light accentuates the solemnity of the moment.

In summary, the image is a visually rich and faithful representation of the Gamani-Jataka climax, capturing the magnificence of Prince Gamani, his recognition of the master's guidance, and the honor bestowed upon him by his brothers. It is an effective visualization of the concept of "excellence that matures" thanks to perseverance and wisdom.

Gamani-Jātaka: breaking the logic of sacrifice

Sage and King in Balance: Sacrifice Unmasked as a False Foundation

Threshold VIII (Gamani-Jātaka) is the point at which compassion not only intercedes or speaks, but undermines the very logic of sacrifice: no longer "who must die to save order?", but "how to save without crushing anyone?". It is the now irreversible approach to the heart of the Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka.

Soglia VIII — Gamani-Jātaka (No. 8)

When compassion undermines the need to sacrifice

STORY REVISITED

In a kingdom crossed by famine and fear, the people asked for a sign. The soothsayers told the king that only a sacrifice would restore balance: a life offered to save the others. The crowd was reassured. Disorder could be tamed with blood.

The chosen one was a young man, chosen not out of guilt, but out of convenience: no powerful man would suffer his loss.

While he was being led to the place of sacrifice, a traveler appeared: Gamani, a traveler without a name and without an escort. He did not cry out against the king, he did not accuse the priests. He only asked to look the condemned man in the eye.

Then he spoke.

Not to defend just one person, but to question the mechanism that was devouring him.

"If order demands a victim," he said, "what order is it? If peace is bought with a life, what peace is left?"

The king, irritated, replied, "Without this gesture, the people will perish."

Gamani lowered his voice: "And if the soul of your kingdom perishes?"

He did not propose to replace the young man. He did not offer another body. He did something more radical: he rejected the very principle that salvation needs a victim.

Silence fell on the crowd. There was no longer a scapegoat to support the collective fear.

The king, for the first time, saw that what he called "necessity" was only the habit of sacrifice.

The young man was freed.

The kingdom was not miraculously healed. The famine did not stop instantly. But something had broken: the idea that one's life can be crushed to save the whole.

And Gamani resumed his journey.

IMAGE DESCRIPTION

The picture shows:

A wise old man holding out a wounded bird with both hands.

In front of him, a king kneeling, with his hands joined: he no longer dominates, he listens.

The light is warm, but fragile, as if it came from the meeting point between their hands.

The bird is not a symbol of victory: it is vulnerable life, what would normally be sacrificed.

Below, the inscription:

"Balance is not crushing."

The center of the image is not authority, but life that cannot be sacrificed without losing the very sense of order.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

1. From the word that saves to the word that dismantles sacrifice

In Threshold VII (Katthahari-Jātaka):

the compassionate word interrupts the condemnation,

Saves a person without attacking the structure head-on.

In Threshold VIII, more happens:

the word does not limit itself to interceding,

it calls into question the sacrificial mechanism itself.

It is no longer:

"Let this man live."

but:

"Why does anyone have to die for order to continue?"

Here compassion becomes an ontological critique of power.

2. "Balance is not crushing" — a new measure of the right

The aphorism of the table is decisive:

Balance is not crushing.

Not:

don't win,

do not impose,

Do not remove the weak element to stabilize the system.

The good is no longer what maintains the structure, but what preserves the fragile.

It is a justice that is not based on collective profit, but on the inviolability of the other.

3. Negative theology: the rejection of the "good that asks for blood"

In an apophatic key, Gamani makes a radical gesture:

it denies that good can be defined as that which requires victims.

It does not offer a new positive foundation.

It does not proclaim an alternative law.

It does something more subtle:

it takes away from the sacrifice its aura of metaphysical necessity.

Good is not what saves many for the price of one.

Good is that which cannot be founded on the destruction of someone.

4. Cioran: against salvation built on the dead

Cioran would have recognized here one of the few forms of ethics that are not false:

Every system that claims to redeem the world by passing over bodies only produces new ruins.

Gamani's gesture does not promise universal redemption.

He doesn't say, "Everything will be all right now."

He says: "At least we will not become executioners in the name of good."

It is a minimal, fragile salvation, but not ideological.

5. Critique of power: the end of the scapegoat

The traditional power:

governs through order,

order through fear,

fear through the sacrifice of someone.

Gamani breaks the chain:

it shows that sacrifice is not necessary, but functional to the maintenance of power.

The king kneeling in the image is not converted: he is unarmed.

Power is not overthrown, but deprived of its symbolic justification.

TOWARDS NIGRODHAMIGA: THE IRREVERSIBLE TURNING POINT

Now the progression is complete:

1. Threshold V — Intercession

   I get in the way for the other.

2. Threshold VI — Self-offering

   I accept to lose myself so as not to hurt.

3. Threshold VII — Word that saves

   I speak to suspend the sentence.

4. Threshold VIII — Breaking of the Sacrifice

   It is no longer acceptable that someone has to die for the world to continue.

And this is why the Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka is now near:

In the Banyan Deer:

the Bodhisattva will offer himself (Threshold VI),

he will intercede before the king (Threshold V–VII),

but above all it will transform the very heart of the law, ensuring that no being is sacrificed anymore.

Gamani-Jātaka prepares the decisive point:

Compassion is no longer just an individual gesture, but a principle that restructures the world.

APHORISM GRAPH — THRESHOLD VIII

"Balance is not crushing."

Not the balance of forces,

but the custody of the fragile.

Not the peace of the victors,

but the life of those who do not count.

Threshold IX — Loyalty Without Reward

Image: A solitary figure in the fog, like a sentinel.

Verse: I remain, even if no one sees.

Gestus: to persevere without witnesses.

Note: Honor loses its audience.

Meaning: Good does not ask for witnesses.

Loyalty without reward — staying even when no one is looking.

Visual description

Subject: A lonely figure with his back to you, immersed in fog, similar to a sentinel.

Composition: the subject is centered and isolated in an open landscape that is lost in gray.

Light and color: diffused light and cool tones dominate the scene, with low contrast and soft texture that softens details.

Depth: The gradation of the fog creates an atmospheric perspective that pushes the gaze into the unknown.

Analysis of gesture and verse

I stay, even if no one sees.

Gestus: the back posture communicates firmness and anonymity; The gesture is one of silent perseverance.

Verse-image relationship: the verse functions as a moral declaration that makes explicit the subject's choice: to remain not for recognition but for duty.

Narrative tone: dry and resolute, devoid of rhetoric, which reinforces the idea of fidelity without spectators.

Symbolism and moral theme

Anonymous perseverance: the fog and the absence of identifying traits transform the figure into an archetype of dedication.

Honor without an audience: The image stages the idea that honor can exist even when it is not observed or celebrated.

Ethics of action: the moral sense proposed is that the good is intrinsic and does not depend on visibility.

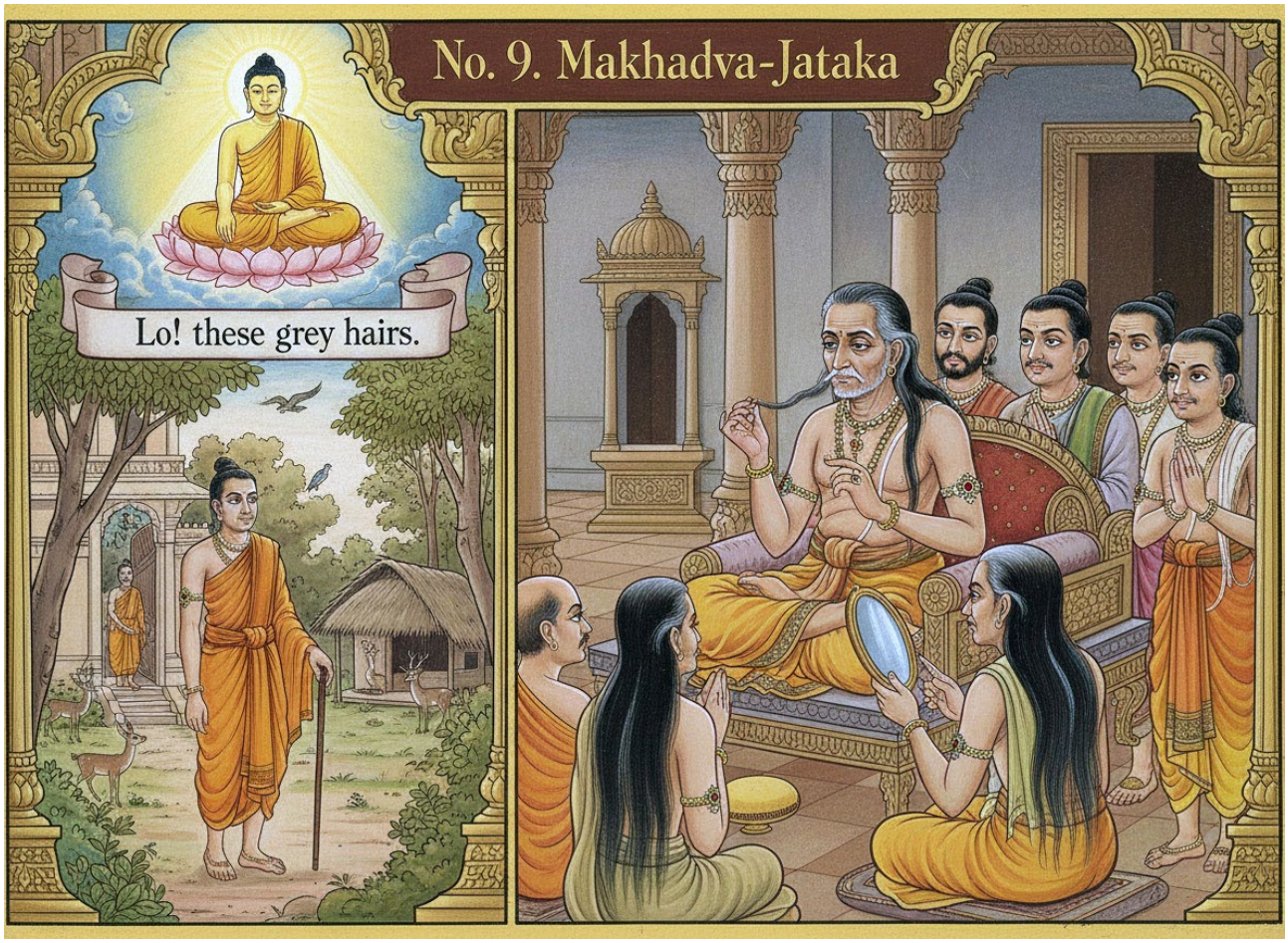
Tone and emotional effect

Atmosphere: contemplative and austere, with a slight melancholy due to isolation.

Impact on the viewer: invites us to reflect on personal responsibility and the dignity of fulfilling one's duty.

Desired emotional response: silent respect, introspection, and a subtle admiration for constancy.

No. 9. Makhadeva-Jataka: "Great Renunciation" of King Makhadeva.



The Gray Hair: Messenger of Death

1. The story

The story is told by the Buddha (the Master) while he was in Jetavana to praise his renunciation of the world. He explains that it was not the first time he had made such a gesture; He had already done it in a previous life.

The Life of King Makhadeva:

A very long time ago, Makhadeva reigned in Mithila, a righteous ruler who lived for incredibly long periods: 84,000 years as a prince, 84,000 as viceroy and as many as king. One day, he ordered his barber to notify him as soon as he saw a gray hair on his head.

The "Messenger of Death":

After millennia, the barber found a single gray hair among the king's dark locks. Using gold tweezers, he tore it off and placed it on Makhadeva's palm. At the sight of that sign of aging, the king was seized by a deep emotion (Samvega): he perceived the hair as the Messenger of Death (Yama-duta) and urgently realized that he had not yet freed himself from spiritual impurities.

The Renunciation:

Although she still had thousands of years to live, Makhadeva decided to abdicate immediately in favor of her eldest son. He gave a village to the barber and retired to the mango forest to live as an ascetic. There he practiced the "Four Perfect Virtues" (Brahma-vihara) for 84,000 years and, upon his death, was reborn in the Kingdom of Brahma.

2. Image Description and Analysis

The illustration is divided into two main sections that represent the transition from mundane to spiritual life.

The Right Panel: The Court and the Sign

King Makhadeva: He is depicted seated on his regal throne, richly decorated. His right hand holds the single gray hair, the object of his contemplation. His expression is calm but absorbed.

The Barber and the Ministers: In the foreground we see the barber (whom the Buddha identifies as Ānanda) holding a mirror, having just shown the king the reality of the passing of time. Around him, ministers watch with amazement or devotion.

Symbolism: The opulence of the court contrasts with the fragility of that single gray hair, which serves as a catalyst for the ruler's inner change.

The Left Panel: The Ascetic Life

The Transformation: We now see the Bodhisatta (the future Buddha) in the guise of a hermit with the typical orange robe, a staff and a necklace of beads. He abandoned the jewels and the throne for the simplicity of the forest.

The Mango Wood: The setting shows a hut made of straw, deer and birds, symbolizing the peace and harmony with nature typical of the ascetic life.

The Celestial Apparition: On the top left, the Buddha is depicted on a lotus throne in an almond of light, signifying that Makhadeva was an earlier incarnation of the Buddha himself. The cartouche reads: "Lo! these grey hairs" ("Ecco! These gray hair"), the central verse of the room recited by the king.

3. Comment and Meaning

This image is not just an illustration of a fairy tale, but a powerful tool of Buddhist teaching:

Impermanence (Anicca): History points out that even an 84,000-year-long life is subject to decline. Gray hair is a universal reminder that death is inevitable.

Spiritual Urgency: Makhadeva does not ignore the sign, nor does she try to dye or hide it. He accepts it as an immediate call to action.

The Cycle of Rebirths: The text concludes by explaining that Makhadeva was later reborn as King Nimi to continue her journey. This shows the continuity of the Bodhisatta's character through the ages.

Identification of the characters: The Master concludes the Jātaka by revealing that in that life:

The Barber was Ānanda.

The Son was Rahula.

King Makhadeva was the Buddha himself.

Makhadeva-Jataka: When staying becomes a form of the world (birth of a non-violent order of the living)

Peace in the sacred forest: a non-violent order of the living appears

Threshold IX (Makhadeva-Jātaka) is the point at which compassion is no longer limited to denying sacrifice (as in Threshold VIII), but begins to redesign the very order of the living: not only "no one must be crushed", but "everyone can inhabit the same space without fear". Here the horizon of the Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka opens up irreversibly.

STORY REVISITED

King Makhādeva had ruled wisely for many years. He was not a tyrant, he was not cruel. The kingdom prospered. But one day, looking in the mirror, he saw a white lock of hair in his hair.

It was not fear of death. It was recognition of time.

He called his son and said:

"The world does not belong to me. I kept it for a while, now I must leave it."

He abdicated the throne, renounced the palace, the guards, the name. Not to escape from the world, but not to keep it as property. He retired to the forest and became an ascetic.

There, in the silence of the trees, he did not look for visions or miracles. He simply stayed.

He did not impose laws on animals, he did not build temples, he did not found schools.

Sitting under a large tree, he let his being become space.

A lion approached without roaring.

A rabbit stopped next to him.

A snake coiled up at his side.

It wasn't magic. It was the absence of threat.

No one sacrificed anyone. No one dominated anyone. The presence of the old ascetic did not command: it made it possible.

And when someone asked him why he did not return to the world of men, he only answered:

"I'm staying, even if no one sees."

IMAGE DESCRIPTION

The image that accompanies this threshold is essential and profoundly symbolic:

An elderly ascetic sitting under a large tree (almost an anticipation of the Banyan).

Next to him, three normally incompatible figures:

a lion,

a rabbit,

a snake.

There is no tension: no predators lurking, no escape.

The light is soft, filtered by the leaves: it does not come from above, but from the stillness of the scene itself.

Below, the inscription:

"I stay, even if no one sees."

The center of the image is not power, nor heroism, but the presence that does not impose itself.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

1. From the negation of sacrifice to the new form of order

In Threshold VIII (Gamani-Jātaka):

The word compassionate dismantles the principle: "Someone must die for the world to continue".

In Threshold IX, the next step takes place:

not only must no one be sacrificed,

but an order in which no one needs to be sacrificed is possible.

Makhadeva does not intervene in a crisis, he does not interrupt a punctual injustice:

he transfigures the very structure of coexistence.

He no longer rules from above:

it becomes a place of coexistence.

2. "I remain, even if no one sees" — compassion as permanence

The aphorism of the table is decisive:

I stay, even if no one sees.

Here compassion is not:

heroic gesture,

spectacular sacrifice,

public word.

It is silent permanence: remaining in a world that does not recognize, does not reward, does not celebrate.

It is the most radical form of fidelity to being:

not to transform the good into identity, role, or power.

Makhadeva does not "make" peace: he is peace.

3. Negative theology: the good as space, not as a command

In an apophatic key, what happens here is decisive:

The good does not appear as a law.

It does not appear as a project.

It does not appear as a positive foundation.

The good is what remains when all appropriation recedes.

Makhadeva does not define the world:

it subtracts enough to allow the world to be without violence.

It is a theology of the habitable void.

4. Cioran: Remaining Without Redemption

Cioran would have seen in this gesture a ruthless and luminous truth: there is no redemption of history, there is no final progress, there is no political "kingdom of God".

And yet:

You can stay without becoming executioners.

Not to save the world, but not to betray it.

Not to found a future, but not to add evil to evil.

"I remain, even if no one sees" is the formula of a hopeless fidelity — and precisely for this reason, honest.

5. Critique of power: the order that does not dominate

Makhādeva makes the most subversive gesture possible against all power:

does not reform the throne,

he does not take control of it,

abandons him.

But not to escape: to show that another order is possible without command.

In the scene with the animals:

the lion does not rule the rabbit,

the snake is not eliminated,

fragility must not be justified.

It is an order that does not work by exclusion, but by co-presence.

TOWARDS THE NIGRODHAMIGA: THE ANTICIPATION OF THE BANYAN

And here we are now at the heart of the journey.

The progression is now clear:

1. Threshold VI — Self-offering

   I become what can be used without hurting.

2. Threshold VII — Word that saves

   I speak to suspend the sentence.

3. Threshold VIII — Breaking of the Sacrifice

   No one has to die to maintain order.

4. Threshold IX — New Order of the Living

   A world is possible in which no one has to be sacrificed.

Here Makhādeva foreshadows exactly what the Banyan Deer (Nigrodhamiga) will make explicit:

The Deer will offer itself (Threshold VI),

he will intercede before the king (Threshold VII),

he will reject the logic of sacrifice (Threshold VIII),

but above all it will establish a new law of coexistence, in which life is no longer taken, but protected.

Makhadeva does not yet save the world: but he shows that the world can be different in its structure.

The Banyan Deer will take the final step: it will transform this silent vision into a public act, a living law, a politics of compassion.

APHORISM GRAPH — THRESHOLD IX

"I stay, even if no one sees."

Not to be an example,

not to found an order,

but because life, at least here,

can breathe without fear.

Threshold X — The Loss of the Name

Image: A broken nameplate dropped in the dust.

Verse: Who I was does not hold me back.

Gestus: accepting anonymity.

Note: The status dissolves.

Meaning: Status falls, the path remains.

"The name falls. The path remains."

The Matter of Detachment

This image is a visual expression of the concept of spoliation. It represents the exact moment in which social identity, built and crystallized in a name, shatters to leave room for the naked essence of the journey.

1. Visual Analysis

The image captures a metal nameplate, a universal symbol of recognition and ownership (think office doors, commemorative plaques or intercoms), lying broken.

The Fracture: The middle crack is not just physical damage; it is an ontological wound. It divides the "name" into illegible fragments, making it impossible to recover the previous identity.

Dust and Light: The surface on which it rests looks like ash or cosmic dust. The grazing light emphasizes the rough texture, as if to suggest that everything solid and "official" is destined to become dust.

The Tilt: The plate is not flat, it is tilted, as if it had just been thrown or had slipped off a support that can no longer support it.

2. The Verse: "Who I was does not hold me"

This phrase transforms loss into liberation.

We often remain anchored to what we have been (successes, titles, traumas) because it gives us security. The "X Threshold" suggests instead that the past is a ballast. Breaking the name means to stop being "someone" for others and start being "yourself" for the journey.

3. Gestus: Accepting Anonymity

In an age obsessed with personal branding and visibility, the act of accepting anonymity is a revolutionary and deeply spiritual gesture.

It is not a loss of value, but a renunciation of the ego.

Accepting anonymity means no longer needing to be confirmed by the gaze of others in order to exist.

4. Meaning: "Status falls, the path remains"

The concept of Threshold X seems to indicate a point of no return.

The dissolution of status: The nameplate was the "title", the social position. When he falls, the individual no longer has excuses or masks to hide behind.

The essentiality of the journey: Once the name is lost, only the action of walking remains. The journey does not need labels; it only requires steps, presence and direction.

Philosophical Synthesis

The work suggests that the Name is a prison of letters. His breaking is the beginning of true freedom. When the status dissolves, there is no emptiness left, but the possibility of moving without the burden of having to correspond to a preset definition.

"The name falls. The path remains." It is the invitation to pass from the dimension of Having (a title, a fame) to that of Being (a wayfarer).

Sukhavihari-Jataka

The Happy

Jātaka n. 10: Sukhavihari (Il Felice)

This story begins when the Master (the Buddha) was in the mango grove of Anūpiya and spoke about the Elder Bhaddiya. Bhaddiya was one of six young nobles who joined the brotherhood, along with Upāli. Many of these attained enlightenment (Arahatship), while others attained various spiritual realizations.

Elder Bhaddiya, who had been a king in his youth, remembered the constant fear in which he lived. Despite being surrounded by numerous guards and sleeping in his regal bed in the palace, he knew no peace. Now, like Arahat, he wandered fearlessly in forests and deserted places. Thinking of this difference, he burst into a heartfelt exclamation: "Oh, happiness! Oh, happiness!"

The brethren reported Bhaddiya's words to the Buddha, and the Buddha replied, "Brothers, this is not the first time that Bhaddiya's life has been happy; His life was no less happy in times past." The monks asked the Buddha to explain, and he revealed a story from a previous life.

A long time ago, when King Brahmadatta reigned in Benares, the Bodhisatta (the future Buddha) was born as a wealthy northern Brahmin. Understanding the evils of sensual desires and the blessings that come from renunciation of the world, he abandoned all lust and retired to the Himalayas, where he became a hermit and attained the eight spiritual realizations. His retinue grew to five hundred ascetics.

One day, at the beginning of the rains, he left the Himalayas with his disciples for a pilgrimage in search of alms and arrived in Benares. He settled in the royal garden as a guest of the king. After he had stayed there for the four months of rains, he went to the king to take his leave. But the king said to him, "You are an old man, reverend sir. Why should you return to the Himalayas? Send your pupils there and stay here yourself."

The Bodhisatta entrusted his five hundred ascetics to his eldest disciple, saying, "You go with these to the Himalayas; I will stay here."

Now, that older disciple had once been a king. He had given up a powerful kingdom to become a monk and, through the practice of meditation, had attained eight realizations. While he was living with ascetics in the Himalayas, one day he had the desire to see his master again. He said to his companions: "Live happily here; I will return as soon as I have paid homage to the master." So he left to meet his master, paid homage to him and greeted him with affection. Then he lay down next to the master on a mat he had spread there.

At that point, the king (King Brahmadatta of Benares himself) arrived, having come to the garden to see the ascetic. She greeted him and sat down to one side. But though he was aware of the king's presence, the older disciple did not rise, but continued to lie there, exclaiming with intense sincerity: "Oh, happiness! Oh, happiness!"

Dissatisfied that the ascetic, although he had seen him, had not arisen, the king said to the Bodhisatta: "Reverend sir, this ascetic must have eaten his fill, since he continues to lie there so happily, exclaiming with such intensity."

"Sire," said the Bodhisatta, "this ascetic was once a king like you. He is thinking about how in ancient times, when he was a layman and lived in royal splendor with many men-at-arms guarding him, he never knew such happiness as he has now. It is the happiness of monastic life, and the happiness that Intuition brings, that impels him to this heartfelt exclamation." And the Bodhisatta also recited this verse to teach the King the Truth:

The man who does not look at himself, nor is he looked at, O sire,

He lives happily, freed from the slavery of desires.

Satisfied with the lesson thus imparted to him, the king said goodbye and returned to his palace. The disciple also took leave of his master and returned to the Himalayas. But the Bodhisatta continued to dwell there, and dying with the Intuition full and intact, he was reborn in the Kingdom of Brahma.

When he finished his lecture and told the two stories, the Master showed the connection between them and identified the births by saying, "Elder Bhaddiya was the disciple of those days, and I myself was the master of the company of ascetics."

Image Analysis, Description and Comment

The image beautifully captures the climax and central message of the Sukhavihari Jātaka.

1. Image Description:

The scene takes place in a lush garden, probably the "royal garden" mentioned in the text, full of colorful flowers, tropical vegetation and a large majestic tree that offers shade, a symbol of wisdom and stability.

In the foreground on the left, an elderly monk lies serenely on a mat, leaning against a cushion, his eyes closed in an expression of profound peace. Her dress is bright orange, typical of the Buddhist tradition.

Next to him, sitting cross-legged, is another younger monk, also dressed in orange, looking calmly at a standing figure.

This standing character, in the center-right of the image, is a man dressed in royal robes, richly decorated with gold and precious fabrics, and wearing an elaborate headdress, clearly a king. His hands are clasped in a gesture of respect or greeting (anjali mudra), and his expression is contemplative, perhaps a little puzzled or expectant.

In the background, two other monks walk quietly, immersing themselves in nature. The mountains veiled by mist on the horizon and the clear sky at sunset (or sunrise) contribute to an atmosphere of tranquility and spirituality.

2. Analysis and Comment:

Character Representation:

The Senior Monk (Bhaddiya/ex-king): His lying position, serene face and closed eyes immediately communicate the concept of "happiness" (sukha) and "rest" (vihari) of the Jātaka. It is not in formal meditation, but in a state of bliss that transcends the need to act or to be alert. It is the visual representation of the statement "Oh, happiness! Oh, happiness!" and of the verse: "The man who does not look at himself, nor is he looked at, O sire, He lives happily, freed from the slavery of desires."

The Seated Monk (Bodhisatta/Master): His composed posture and gaze turned to the king suggest the role of spiritual guide and teacher. It is he who "explains the Truth" to the king. His presence is calm and authoritative.

The King (Brahmadatta): His lavish attire contrasts sharply with the simplicity of monastic robes, symbolizing the weight of the "status" and "desires" from which the monks have freed themselves. His expression and gesture suggest respect but also a certain curiosity or initial incomprehension in the face of the peace of the senior monk. He is "the one who looks" and "the one who is looked at", as opposed to the free man described in the verse.

Setting:

The Royal Garden: It is the place of encounter between the worldly world (the king) and the spiritual world (the monks). Its lush beauty is not a symbol of material luxury, but rather a place of peace where nature itself reflects serenity.

The Majestic Tree: It provides shade and protection, but also a metaphor for the stability and depth of wisdom, under which the lesson takes place.

Symbolism and Message of the Jātaka:

The image perfectly captures the fundamental contrast of the Jātaka: the difference between the superficial and anxious happiness that comes from worldly power and protection, and the deep and lasting happiness that comes from renunciation, inner peace and freedom from desires. The king, although surrounded by all that the world can offer, is the one who has yet to understand the true happiness of the monk who "does not look at himself, nor is he looked at".

The absence of text in the image is effective, as the expressions and postures of the characters communicate the message in a universal way. The general atmosphere is one of harmony, although there is a veiled emotional contrast between the calm of the monks and the more "external" condition of the king.

In summary, the image is an excellent and evocative representation of the Sukhavihari-Jataka, able to visually communicate the lesson about true happiness and liberation from the constraints of the world.

Sukhavihari-Jataka*: way of inhabiting the world, violence no longer finds a foothold*

Sage, deer and bird in the woods: compassion becomes an impersonal path, inhabitable by all

The X Threshold is the point at which compassion definitively ceases to be an isolated gesture or a simple criticism of sacrifice: it becomes a way of inhabiting the world, a direct anticipation of the epiphany of the Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka. Here it is no longer a question of saving someone, but of transforming the very form of power and existence.

STORY REVISITED

They called him Sukhavihāri: "he who dwells in peace".

But he had not chosen that name. It had slipped on him like a leaf on water.

He lived on the edge of the forest, walking every day with no apparent destination. He did not teach doctrines, he did not preach renunciation, he did not found communities. Those who met him noticed only one thing: the violence was receding.

An armed man lowered his hand.

An injured animal did not flee.

A tired bird alighted next to him without trembling.

One day a group of hunters entered the forest, determined to prey. The deer leading the herd fled... but then he returned. He stopped on the path in front of Sukhavihāri.

The hunters stopped. No command stopped them. It was not fear. It was not superstition. It was as if their intention had lost consistency.

One of them murmured:

"Who is this man?"

Sukhavihari only replied:

"The name falls. The path remains."

He did not intercede. He did not plead. He did not impose a law.

Yet no shot was fired.

When the deer disappeared into the trees, the silence remained like an unsigned blessing.

Sukhavihāri resumed walking.

He had not saved "that" deer.

He had shown that violence is not necessary to inhabit the world.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMAGE (TABLE X)

The image that accompanies the X Threshold is of an almost sacramental sobriety:

An old ascetic walks on a path in the forest.

Next to him:

a deer that does not flee,

a bird perched on the ground, fragile, motionless.

There is no visible gesture of protection: no raised hand, no wall, no intervention.

The light is warm, not dramatic. It does not come from a "theological" heaven, but from the quality of presence.

Below, the inscription:

"The name falls. The path remains."

The visual center is not the ascetic, but the path itself: what remains when the ego no longer wants to possess the good.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

1. From compassion as a gesture to compassion as a form of life

Up to the previous thresholds:

VI: unreserved self-offering.

VII: word that saves without dominating.

VIII: breaking the logic of sacrifice.

IX: birth of a non-violent order of the living.

With Sukhavihāri, compassion takes the decisive step:

it becomes a way of being, no longer intervention.

We do not act "against" violence.

We live in a space where violence no longer finds a foothold.

2. "The name falls. The path remains" — apophases of good

This threshold is profoundly apophatic.

The good no longer needs to be named.

Virtue does not become identity.

Holiness does not become a role.

In terms of negative theology:

what matters is not who embodies the good, but the space that opens up when the ego is emptied of appropriation.

Sukhavihāri is not "teacher", "savior", "authority".

It is a journey made possible.

3. Cioran: to remain without redemption, but without hurting

In a Cioranian key, there is no promise of final salvation here.

There is no teleology of history. There is no redemption of the world.

Yet, something happens:

Violence is no longer inevitable.

Not because the world is good, but because there is a presence that does not cooperate with evil.

"The name falls" means: no ideology of good.

"The path remains" means: a concrete possibility of not hurting.

4. Critique of power: the authority that does not command

Sukhavihāri is the most subversive figure possible:

does not enact laws,

does not exert force,

He does not ask for obedience.

Yet it transforms the behavior of others.

Here power is no longer:

ability to force,

right to punish,

management of sacrifice.

It is defusing power:

the mere presence empties the need for violence.

This prepares the Nigrodhamiga:

the Banyan Deer will not overthrow the king by force, but will convert power from within, making sacrifice unthinkable.

TOWARDS NIGRODHAMIGA: THRESHOLD OF EPIPHANY

Progression is now complete:

VIII: the sacrifice is exposed as a false foundation.

IX: a non-violent order of the living appears.

X: compassion becomes an impersonal path, habitable by all.

With Sukhavihāri, we are on the immediate threshold of the Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka.

The Banyan Deer will do what is only implied here:

not only to live without violence,

not only refuse sacrifice,

but intercede publicly, before the king,

and transform the very law of the kingdom: from a power that comes to life to a power that guards it.

Sukhavihāri shows that good can be nameless.

The Nigrodhamiga will show that the good can become the structure of the world.

GRAPHIC APHORISM — THRESHOLD X

"The name falls. The path remains."

When good no longer seeks a face,

can finally become a road.

And where there is a road,

no one must be sacrificed anymore.

Threshold XI — The Humiliation Crossing

Image: a cloak left on the ground, without a body.

Verse: I don't defend myself from being anything.

Gestus: to remain without footholds.

Note: the subject is stripped in form, not yet in substance.

Plate XI — The Crossing of Humiliation

Meaning: The subject is stripped, but not yet dissolved.

Registration:

I don't defend myself from being anything.

The Humiliation Crossing

The image produced for Threshold XI — The Crossing of Humiliation visually translates a moment of extreme transition, where the external identity is abandoned to make room for the fertile void.

Analysis of the composition and its symbolic meaning:

1. Visual Description: The Abandonment Scene

The image is dominated by the bare stone, which serves as a stage for the only protagonist: a gray cloak lying on the ground.

The Cloak: It is not folded with care, nor thrown in anger; it simply appears "left", as if the wearer had vanished or had decided he no longer needed it. The heavy folds suggest a concrete matter that has lost its function of protection or status.

The Light: An oblique light source runs through the scene, creating a sharp contrast between the illuminated areas and the soft shadows. This light does not reveal a face, but highlights the texture of the fabric and the porosity of the stone.

The Environment: The background suggests a physical threshold (an opening in a stone structure) overlooking a deserted, twilight horizon. It is a border place, where there is no shelter but the land itself.

2. Symbolic Analysis and Commentary

The image perfectly captures the tension between form (the cloak) and absence (the missing body).

"I don't defend myself from being anything": The empty cloak is tangible proof of this lack of defense. Without a body to support it, the cloak is "nothing" but cloth. It represents the acceptance of one's own ontological nakedness.

The Gestus (To remain without handholds): The absence of human figures or furniture forces the eye to rest only on stone and fabric. There are no hands shaking, there are no handholds. There is only the weight of gravity that pulls everything downwards, towards humility (from the Latin humus, earth).

Stripped in form, not yet in substance: The fact that the cloak is still there, visible and tangible, indicates that the process is halfway through. The social "form," the role, the protection have been laid down, but the "substance" (what remains after one has stripped oneself of everything) has yet to face its final dissolution.

3. Connection with the Sense of the Table

The meaning of Plate XI is "The subject is stripped, but not yet dissolved".

The image represents the precise moment of this "not yet". We see the envelope (the spoliation), but the void surrounding the cloak suggests that the subject is already transiting elsewhere. Humiliation here is not understood as degradation, but as voluntary stripping of the ego: it is the act of laying down one's weapons and garments to pass through the narrow door of inner truth.

Aesthetic note: The gray-blue tones and the essentiality of the composition eliminate any sentimental distraction, restoring a feeling of absolute silence and expectation.

Lakkhana-Jataka (No. 11): The Importance of Wisdom

The Story: The Jātaka of Lakkhana

The Buddha told this story while in the Bamboo Grove to explain the difference between his disciple Sāriputta (full of wisdom) and his rebellious cousin Devadatta (blinded by pride).

The history of the past:

In a distant time, in Rājagaha, the Bodhisatta was born as a magnificent deer, head of a herd of a thousand specimens. He had two sons: Lakkhana (the Fortunate), wise and shrewd, and Kāla (the Black), foolish and impulsive.

When his father became old, he divided the herd: five hundred deer in Lakkhana and five hundred in Kāla. However, the harvest season arrived, the most dangerous period: the farmers, to protect the fields, dug pits, placed sharp poles and death traps everywhere. The father warned his sons: "Go to the remote mountains and return only when the harvest is over."

Kāla's Path: Heedless of danger and ignoring the rhythms of nature, Kāla led his pack into the fields at dawn and dusk, just when the hunters were lurking. One by one, his deer fell into traps or were hit by arrows. Kāla returned to his father completely alone, having lost the entire herd through his negligence.

Lakkhana's path: Lakkhana, on the other hand, was cunning. He carefully avoided villages and inhabited areas. He moved his pack only in the middle of the night, in total silence. Thanks to his wisdom, he did not lose a single head.

On their return, their father uttered these verses:

"The upright and gentle man gets his reward. Watch Lakkhana lead his entire group, while Kāla returns stripped of his entire pack."

The Buddha concluded by explaining that Kala was Devadatta, Lakkhana was Sāriputta, and the wise deer father was himself.

Image Description

The image visually represents the powerful contrast between the success of wisdom and the failure of foolishness:

The Central Contrast: The composition is divided into two moments or moods. On one side we see the majesty of a large deer (Lakkhana) emerging from a safe landscape, surrounded by a large and vital herd. On the other, the lonely and tired figure of a deer (Kāla) crossing a wasteland.

The Atmosphere and the Light:

For Lakkhana, the light is that of the deep night or a clear dawn, which recalls the protection and secrecy of his movements. The deer behind him are depicted with dignity.

For Kāla, the tones are darker, evoking the sense of loss and the weight of loneliness.

The Symbolic Detail: There are no visible human beings, but the threat is suggested by the hostile environment and the cultivated fields in the background, which represent the world of "desire" and "danger" from which the sage learns to keep his distance.

Analysis and Commentary

The image is not just an illustration of a fairy tale, but an allegory of the leader's responsibility:

The Deer as a Guide: In Buddhist symbolism, the deer represents meekness but also alertness. The image emphasizes that the guide is not the one who "runs ahead", but the one who guarantees the salvation of those who follow him.

Wisdom vs. Impulse: The image of Kāla, alone and "undressed", almost recalls the "Threshold of Humiliation" discussed earlier. While for the spiritual seeker self-despoiling may be a choice (Threshold XI), for Kāla it is the painful consequence of ignorance (avijjā).

The value of Time: History teaches that success does not depend only on strength, but on the knowledge of the "right time" (Kāla-ñ̃ñutā). The image captures this concept through the use of landscape and weather: the wise man knows when to hide and when to advance.

In conclusion, the image celebrates Sāriputta (through Lakkhana) as the model of the perfect disciple who, by following the Dhamma, not only saves himself, but protects the entire community (the Sangha/herd) from the snares of the world.

Lakkhana-Jātaka: immediate threshold at the epiphany of the Nigrodhamiga

Sage and deer in the woods

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Story Revisited – Lakkhaṇa-Jātaka (Threshold XI)

"I don't defend myself against being anything."

Once upon a time, the Bodhisatta was born as an ascetic: poor, homeless, with no other possession than his own breath. He lived on the margins of the world, where words are extinguished and silence is no longer escape, but dwelling. The villages saw him passing: some mocked him, others feared him, few stopped to look at him.

One day he arrived in a land governed by the logic of efficiency: everything had to prove its worth, every life to be useful for something else. Men were also counted as escorts. And those who did not produce, those who did not defend themselves, those who did not claim their place, were considered waste.

The ascetic did not respond to the accusations. He did not defend his choice. He didn't try to explain. He stayed. He sat down by the roadside, where wagons kicked up dust and soldiers shouted orders. And in his silence, something happened: those who passed slowed down; those who insulted lowered their voices; Those who were in a hurry felt a new restlessness, as if the race suddenly lost its sight.

A powerful man said to him:

"If you don't justify yourself, if you don't show your worth, you'll be trampled underfoot."

The ascetic raised his eyes:

"I don't defend myself from being anything."

There was no challenge in those words, no resignation. Only truth.

And power, for a moment, did not know how to answer. Because you could neither buy nor punish those who did not pretend to be someone. The presence of the ascetic was not protest, but subtraction: subtraction from the game of force, from the calculation of merit, from the logic of sacrifice.

Many did not understand. But some, returning to their homes, began to wonder if life should really always be a conquest. If the value could not be kept instead. If there were no form of authority that arises not from domination, but from nakedness.

Thus the Bodhisatta, without proclaiming himself a guide, without imposing any law, cracked the invisible heart of power: showing that giving up defending oneself can become the highest form of protection for everyone.

And in that silence, the step of the Banyan Deer could already be heard, far away.

Description of the image (Table XI)

In the image we see an old ascetic kneeling, his hands joined in a gesture that is not a supplication but a delivery. In front of him stands a majestic deer, a figure still veiled, not fully revealed: it is not yet the Nigrodhamiga, but its symbolic prefiguration.

The environment is a forest bathed in a golden and milky light: it is not idyllic nature, but a liminal space, between the world and the beyond. The deer does not threaten, it does not dominate: it stays. Its verticality is presence, not power.

Below, the inscription:

"I don't defend myself against being anything."

It is not a decorative phrase: it is the key to the scene. Man does not ask for salvation; it does not demand justice; he does not resist. It is placed at the point where the ego empties, but without disappearing. The small animal figure next to it (the bird) suggests that this scene is about all living things, not just humans.

Analysis and Commentary – The XI Threshold in the Way of Awakening

1. From compassion to ego dissolution

If in the previous thresholds compassion:

it arises as responsibility (II),

becomes active care (III),

he strips himself of the calculation (IV),

is transformed into intercession (V),

until it becomes an offering of oneself (VI-VII-VIII),

Here the decisive step takes place:

compassion is no longer an act, but an ontological condition.

It is no longer a question of "helping someone", but of ceasing to defend one's being as the center.

This is the point at which the Way ceases to be moral and becomes metaphysical.

2. Negative theology: the act of non-defense

In an apophatic key, this threshold is the moment in which the subject:

he no longer affirms himself,

it does not pretend to be "just",

it does not seek legitimacy.

Saying "I don't defend myself from being anything" means:

do not oppose emptiness,

not to sacralize identity,

not protecting the ego as the ultimate value.

Here compassion is not born from a strong subject who saves a weak one, but from an "I" that empties itself to let the other pass. It is the threshold at which mercy ceases to be a gesture and becomes the structure of being.

3. Critique of power: when domination does not find a foothold

Every power needs something from:

reward,

punish,

recognize,

measure.

But those who do not defend themselves cannot be caught in the logic of power.

Not because it resists, but because it no longer plays the game of identity.

This threshold unmasks the secret foundation of the domain:

Power lives on the fear of losing something.

Those who accept that they are "nothing" suddenly render power useless.

It is here that compassion becomes ontological politics: it does not reform power, it makes it superfluous.

4. Preparation for the Nigrodhamiga – From Non-Defense to Universal Intercession

The Banyan Deer (Threshold XII) is not a moral hero.

It is the cosmic form of this renunciation of the self.

In the Nigrodhamiga:

the Bodhisatta not only does not defend himself, but takes upon himself the death of the other, intercedes not for an individual, but for all living beings.

Threshold XI prepares for this gesture by showing that:

Only those who have stopped defending their own being can become a place of passage for the lives of others.

Compassion, here, is no longer emotion or choice:

it is the law of reality.

Summary of Threshold XI

Lakkhaṇa-Jātaka is the moment when the Way of Awakening enters its final phase:

from → care to dispossession → intercession → to the renunciation of being someone.

I don't defend myself from being anything:

it is not annihilation, but absolute openness.

And it is precisely from this opening that the Banyan Deer can arise:

not as a moral figure, but as the transformation of power itself into universal compassion.

Threshold XII — Nigrodhamiga: Non-Separation

Image: A golden deer on the stump, the world holds its breath. All around: animals, silence, restrained light. Above, a luminous space without form.

Reverse: I do not save: I become.

Gestus: taking upon oneself the destiny of the other.

Note: no longer ethics but ontology: the ego falls, compassion remains as the structure of being.

Better is death in the company of the righteous than a long life in separation.

Meaning: Here there is no longer "I" and "other". Compassion is not an act: it is the structure of being.

Registration:

I don't save: I become.

I don't save, I become

The image for Threshold XII — Nigrodhamiga is not just an illustration, but a visual translation of a profound philosophical concept: the transition from ethics (doing good) to ontology (being good).

1. The Center: The Deer and the Stump

The Golden Deer is not depicted moving or fleeing, but in a pose of absolute stasis on an old mossy stump.

Symbolism of the Stump: The stump represents what is severed, the end of a natural cycle. By raising the deer on this "base", the image transforms it into a living altar. He is not a king on a throne, but a being who offers himself.

Intrinsic Light: The deer is not illuminated by an external source; it seems to emanate a light of its own, warm and golden, which contrasts with the cold blue of the forest. This recalls the idea that compassion is not a reflection, but the very substance of his being.

2. The Circle of Animals: The End of Duality

In the distance, we notice wolves, bears, and birds watching.

The Ontological Truce: There is no predatory tension. The wolf does not look at the deer as prey, nor does the deer look at the wolf with fear. This is the heart of Non-Separation.

The World holds its breath: The fog and the circular arrangement of the animals suggest a "total silence". It is that suspended moment in which the categories of "I" and "other" vanish. Here compassion is the "structure of being".

3. Suspended Light and Formless Space

Above the deer floats an ethereal globe of light, with no defined contours or specific religious symbols.

The Absence of Symbols: Sacredness is pure, not mediated by icons. That luminous space represents the "fertile void," the state in which individual form dissolves into the universal.

Blue-Gold Palette: The color contrast serves to separate the world of matter (the deep, cold blue of the forest) from the spirit of compassion (the vibrant gold).

Commentary on the Verse: *"I do not save: I become"

This phrase is the keystone of the entire Threshold XII.

Beyond Heroism: "Saving" implies a dualism: a savior (active) and a saved (passive).

Identification: "I become" means that the Deer (Nigrodhamiga) is not performing an external heroic gesture; he becomes the pain of the other, absorbs it until there is no longer distinction. Taking upon oneself the destiny of the other is not a sacrifice based on duty, but the recognition that the other is me.

The Gestus: Taking Destiny Upon Yourself

The image captures this Gestus through the solemnity of the deer. He is "exposed" on the stock, vulnerable but invulnerable in his identification with the Whole. Death in the company of the righteous is preferable to life in separation because separation is the only true "death" of the soul.

Final Note: The image communicates that compassion is not a one-time act, but a constant vibration of reality when the veil of ego falls.

No. 12 Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka

The Parable of Compassion

The Story

The story begins at the time of the Buddha, in Jetavana. A young nun had become pregnant (without her knowledge, before taking her vows). Devadatta, the Buddha's rival, mercilessly condemned her to expulsion. But the Buddha, with infinite wisdom, had the case investigated by the venerable Upāli and the lay Visākhā, demonstrating the innocence of the woman. To explain his protection of her and her son (the future Arhat Kassapa), the Buddha told a story of past lives.

Life in the forest

In a remote era in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a magnificent Golden Deer, shining like the sun, called Nigrodha (Deer of the Banyans), king of a herd of 500 deer. Not far away, another equally beautiful deer, Sakha (Branch Deer), led another herd.

The cruel pact

The King of Benares loved hunting so much that he interrupted the work of all the people. To avoid this, the subjects fenced off a park and pushed the two packs into it. Every day, the king or his cook went to kill a deer. To prevent many from being needlessly injured by arrows during the escape, Nigrodha proposed a deal: every day, in turn, a deer would spontaneously offer itself to the butcher's stump.

The supreme sacrifice

One day, fate fell on a pregnant doe from Sakha's herd. She begged her king to skip the shift until she gave birth, to save the baby. Sakha, selfish, refused. The doe then went to Nigrodha.

King Nigrodha did not force anyone in his pack to replace her. Instead, he went himself to rest his head on the log.

The Wave of Compassion

When the cook saw the King of the Deer — to whom the human sovereign had granted immunity — he ran to call the King of Benares. The latter, moved by the gesture, asked: "My friend, why are you here?". Nigrodha explained that she could not allow one mother and her baby to die, nor could she shift the burden onto another.

The King of Benares, struck by such love, exclaimed: "Not even among men have I seen such compassion. I give you life, and I give it to her."

But Nigrodha didn't stop. He asked for and obtained salvation for:

1. His whole pack.

2. All other deer.

3. All quadrupeds.

4. All birds.

5. Even fish.

The moral

Nigrodha taught the King the Five Precepts, turning a predator into a protector of life. The deer, grateful, taught her little one that it is better to die next to a righteous being like Nigrodha than to live long in Sakha's selfishness.

Image Analysis and Commentary

Visual Description

The image captures the metaphysical culmination of the Jātaka. In the center, the Golden Deer (Nigrodha) sits with regal composure on a huge moss-covered log of wood. His figure exudes an inner luminescence that illuminates the bluish darkness of the forest.

Around him, in a solemn circle, animals that in nature would be predators or prey have gathered: wolves, bears, owls and crows. Everyone is motionless, facing him. Above the deer's head, a suspended ball of light shines like a spirit moon.

Symbolic Analysis

The Log as an Altar: The log, which in the story is the place of death (the pact with the butcher), in the image becomes a throne of holiness. It represents the transformation of sacrifice into elevation.

The Ontological Light: The deer is not only "beautiful", it is made of light. This reflects the concept of "I do not save: I become": he is not just performing an action, he is compassion that illuminates the darkness of ignorance.

The Circle of Non-Separation: The presence of other animals is fundamental. It represents the moment when Nigrodha obtains salvation for all creatures. The food hierarchy is suspended; fear is replaced by recognition. This is the meaning of Threshold XII: compassion as the very structure of reality.

Philosophical Commentary

The image does not simply illustrate a fairy tale, but visualizes a paradigm shift. We generally think of compassion as a "feeling" that one "me" has toward an "other."

Here, the stasis of the deer and the silence it emanates suggest that the ego has fallen. There is no longer a distinction between the deer, the pregnant doe and the watching king.

The blue-gold palette emphasizes this detachment: blue is the world of Samsara (the cycle of birth and death), gold is Nirvana or the nature of the Buddha breaking through time.

"Better is death in the company of the righteous than a long life in separation."

The picture shows exactly that: the union of all beings within the range of Bodhisatta awareness.

Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka

A deer and a fawn in the woods

Threshold XII – Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka is not only the last stage: it is the point at which everything that has been prepared in the previous thresholds is concentrated and transfigured. Here compassion is no longer a gesture, word, choice or renunciation: it becomes a form of being, the law of the world, the transformation of power itself.

STORY REVISITED

Two herds of deer lived in the large royal park.

One was led by the Banyan Deer: golden, silent, majestic.

The other from the Deer of the Branches: equally proud, but tied to the law of survival.

The king hunted every day. The park had become a factory of orderly death: one prey a day, so as not to waste, not to hurt unnecessarily—so it seemed. The deer, one after the other, presented themselves at the stump. No escape, no rebellion: only the geometry of the end.

One day fate chose a pregnant doe.

He went to his king, the Stag of the Branches, and asked only one thing:

"Let my little one come into the world. Then I'll take my place."

The king of the branches could not listen.

The law was the law: the turn was his.

The doe, with the weight of life inside her, then walked towards the other herd.

He told his story to the Banyan Deer.

And the Banyan Deer did not respond with a decision.

Non discusse la legge.

He did not calculate the damage.

No, offers a compromesso.

He got up.

And, without witnesses, he went to the place of execution.

He placed his neck on the stump.

When the royal cook saw this, he ran to the king:

"Your Majesty, the king of the deer is here. The one to whom you had given life!"

The king arrived in haste. He looked at the golden animal kneeling in front of him.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

The Banyan Deer answered:

"A life takes time to become. I cannot defend her without becoming myself what she cannot yet be."

The king remained silent.

He didn't have a rebel in front of him.

He did not have a victim in front of him.

He had in front of him a being who did not ask to save, but to transform.

"Get up," said the king at last. "Your life is saved. And with yours, that of the doe and her baby."

But the Banyan Deer did not move.

She looked the king in the eye, as if she were looking at him for the first time.

"If you only save the two of us, what really changes?"

"What will happen to the other deer?"

"What will become of the other creatures?"

"What will become of what you call power, if he lives by the death of him who cannot speak?"

The king trembled.

Because he understood that it was not a deer that spoke, but a law older than hunting, stronger than the kingdom.

"So..." He murmured, "I will save everyone."

And at that moment something happened that no sword could achieve:

the hunt ceased.

Not out of fear.

Not by command.

But because the violence was no longer founded.

The Banyan Deer stood up.

He had not become king.

He had made the reign of death superfluous.

He had not saved a life.

It had become the place where all lives could stay.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMAGE (TABLE XII)

The picture shows:

The Banyan Deer, motionless and regal, bent over a reclining doe, fragile, pregnant, entrusted.

On the right, in dim light, the king with his bow lowered: power suspended, disarmed not by a superior force, but by a presence that does not oppose it.

The light is golden, but not triumphant: it is ontological, as if it came from the very structure of the scene.

In the center, the inscription:

"I don't save: I become."

The deer does not "protect" the deer in the human sense of the term.

It does not act as a shield.

It is the place where life can go on.

The image does not represent an act, but a mutation of the order of the world.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY — THE HEART OF THE ROUTE

1. From compassion as a gesture to compassion as a being

The whole Way led here:

I–II: discernment and responsibility (non-illusion).

III–IV: care that strips itself of calculation.

V–VI: intercession and self-offering.

VII-VIII: a word that saves without dominating, a break with the logic of sacrifice.

IX–X: birth of an order of the living, compassion as a way of inhabiting the world.

XI: "I do not defend myself from being nothing"—dissolution of the ego as a condition.

Now, in Threshold XII, the final transfiguration takes place:

Compassion is no longer what you do for the other.

It is what you are, instead of the world that kills.

"I do not save: I become" means:

I do not place myself as a subject who helps an object,

but I make myself an ontological space in which the other can exist.

2. Negative theology: the act that arises from emptiness

In an apophatic key, the Banyan Deer is not a "savior".

He doesn't say: I'm good.

He does not claim: I am just.

It is not defined: I am compassion.

Yet compassion happens.

It is the point at which the subject has emptied itself so radically (Threshold XI) that it has become transparent to the Nameless Good.

The good is no longer an attribute: it is a presence that takes shape.

Here negative theology does not deny God:

it denies the appropriation of the Good by the ego.

3. Critique of power: absolute subversion

The king represents power in its archetypal form:

who lives decides,

organizes death,

He calls "order" what is ritualized violence.

The Banyan Deer does not strongly oppose it.

He does not overthrow the king.

He does not take the throne.

He does something infinitely more radical:

it makes power useless.

The king can only say, "I will save."

But the Deer answers: "And then?"

He does not ask for a grace.

It calls for a transformation of the very structure of domination.

It does not just stop an injustice.

It defuses the logic that makes injustice possible.

Here power is not reformed:

it is transfigured into responsibility for the living.

4. Compassion as universal intercession

This is the absolute novelty of the Nigrodhamiga:

does not intercede for himself,

does not intercede for the doe,

he intercedes for all.

There is no selection of worthy lives.

There is no cost calculation.

There is no "necessary" sacrifice.

Compassion becomes cosmic:

it does not concern an individual, but the order of being.

Banyan Deer does not save:

it becomes the threshold through which life passes without being killed.

FINAL SUMMARY — THE HEART OF THE ROUTE

Threshold XII is not a moral, nor is it an edifying parable.

It is a metaphysics of compassion:

good not as a command,

justice not as law,

salvation not as an intervention.

But as a transformation of the way in which being relates to being.

"I don't save: I become."

I become space.

I become a threshold.

I become an intercession.

And when this happens, the world is no longer founded on sacrifice.

Power can no longer live on death.

Compassion is no longer the exception:

it is the very form of reality.

This is the Way of Awakening.

And the Banyan Deer is its silent heart.

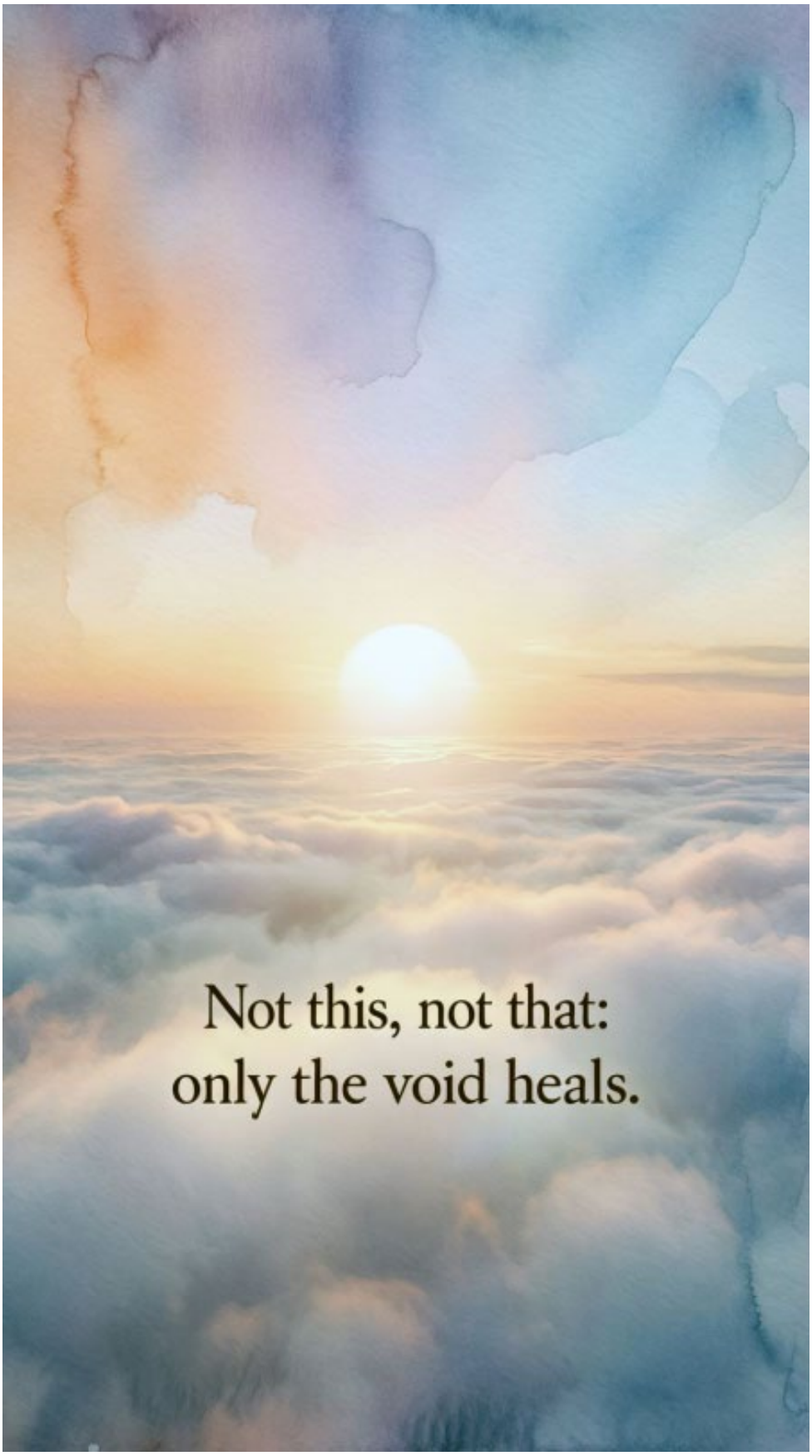
Apophatic Epilogue

Image: Unsourced light. Indistinct horizon.

Verse: Not this, not that: only the emptiness that heals.

Note: the way does not lead to a better subject, but to the cessation of separate subjectivity.

Meaning: Awakening does not produce a better subject. Dissolves the separation.



The emptiness that heals, the form that retracts

1. Description

The image of the Apophatic Epilogue presents itself as a horizon without objects: no figure, no center, no scene.

Just a gradient of soft light, without an identifiable source, fading from light to indistinct. There is no "something to look at": the gaze cannot rest, it does not find symbolic footholds.

The verse — "Not this, not that: only the emptiness that heals" — does not function as a caption, but as a linguistic threshold: it is the last sign before silence. The text does not explain the image; empties it further.

Visually:

There is no perspective: no "in front" or "behind",

there is no contrast: everything is pacified in a light that does not hurt,

There is no event: only presence without phenomenon.

It is an image that does not represent, but portrays the representing itself.

2. Symbolic analysis: negative theology in visual form

This table is consistent with the heart of apophatic theology:

you don't say what is,

you remove what is not.

The horizon "of light without a source" visually realizes the principle of the negative way:

not God as an object, not the Awakening as a state, not the Subject as a landing place.

Light does not "illuminate something": it is what remains when everything that could be named has fallen.

It is a light that does not reveal, but disarms.

In this sense, the image is not the "fulfillment" of the Way, but its self-erasure: the Way does not lead to a higher form, but to the dissolution of the form as possession.

3. Philosophical commentary: Cioran, the void that heals

The sentence:

"Not this, not that: only the emptiness that heals"

resonates deeply with Cioran:

not redemption as conquest,

not salvation as identity,

but radical stripping of the need to be "someone".

Here healing is not therapeutic, it is not improvement:

it is the cessation of the ego as a project.

The void is not nihilistic; it is non-appropriate.

It does not console: it takes away the illusion that there is something to possess, even compassion.

4. Relationship with the 12 Threshold Way

After the Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka, where compassion becomes universal intercession and transformation of power, this image takes a further step:

not only transform power,

but to dissolve the very structure of subject/power.

If the Banyan Deer is the figure of compassion that takes the other upon itself,

the Apophatic Epilogue is what remains when there is no longer "who" intercedes.

Gone is there:

he who saves,

he who is saved,

nor the act of saving.

It remains only presence without an owner.

5. Ultimate meaning: "the way does not lead to a better subject"

The note is decisive:

"The way does not lead to a better subject, but to the cessation of separate subjectivity."

The image embodies this thesis in a rigorous way:

no face,

no figure,

no redemptive symbols.

He doesn't say, "You are this."

He says, "You are no longer what you thought you were."

It is a mysticism without an object and a compassion without identity.

6. Closure: the anti-icon

This board works as an anti-icon:

does not invite devotion,

does not propose a model,

it does not found a new narrative.

It is a space in which even the Way can be left.

After twelve thresholds, twelve figures, twelve transfigurations of responsibility into compassion,

Here only what remains is what cannot be retained:

the emptiness that heals because it does not belong to anyone.

Editorial caption

Apophatic Epilogue

Not an image to look at, but a space to cross.

Here the Way does not arrive at a better subject, nor at a higher form of the self.

Everything that could be named recedes: only the light remains without a source,

an indistinct horizon, a presence without property.

Not this, not that: only the emptiness that heals.

Awakening does not add, it does not perfect, it does not redeem as a possession.

Dissolves the separation.

It does not save: it unravels the boundary between those who save and those who are saved.

This is not the fulfillment of the Way,

but the point at which the Way can be left.

When nothing remains to grasp,

Compassion is no longer a gesture:

it is the silent form of being.

Afterword (Power, Cioran, Negative Theology)

Power: it is based on separation. Threshold XII cancels it from within.

Cioran: do not redeem history; suspend it at the point of expendable.

Apophasis: as God beyond names, the awakened beyond the self.

End: not a morality of good, but an ontology of non-separation.

Reading note (Cioran, Negative Theology, Critique of Power)

This sequence does not build a "spiritual hero":

Negative theology: every threshold subtracts identity. It does not add virtues, it empties them.

Cioran: No historical redemption. Only the suspension of the mechanism at the point of the expendable.

Critique of power: power lives on separation. In the last panel, separation falls → power remains without an object.

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[i] Revelation 8
Title The Awakening of Silence: Revelation 8 and the Paradox of Power
Subtitle A critical analysis that, through negative theology, reveals the tensions between spiritual awakening and the unstoppable dynamics of progress.
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Revelation 8
Title The Awakening of Silence: Revelation 8 and the Paradox of Power
Subtitle A critical analysis that, through negative theology, unveils the tensions between spiritual awakening and the relentless dynamics of progress.
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